ABORIGINES AND POVERTY

A study of interethnic relations and culture conflict in a Western Australian town

Hans Dagmar

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Promotor : Prof. Dr. A.A. Trouwborst

Co-referent: Dr. A.C. van der Leeden

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In memory of

Chubby Yowadji, Bob Williams,

Peter Jackson and Tommy Dodd.

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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION.

This study is an ethnography of the sociocultural situation of people of Aboriginal descent living in Carnarvon, a Western Australian country town. The lives of these people are markedly influenced by European-Australian institutions, and traditional Aboriginal culture (1) to certain groups of Aborigines in this community seems to have lost much of its significance.

The influence of Aboriginal traditions should not be dismissed too easily, however. Not only do they still play an active role in the life of some older people, but they make themselves felt indirectly in the lives of all others of Aboriginal descent. As R.M. Berndt, (1969:2) says, "...for people of Aboriginal descent, wherever they are located, the past is always significant, as it is for ourselves... it is relevant in two ways. Their contemporary situation today with their specific problems, is a consequence of there having been a traditional past. Also, the immediate ancestors of most people of Aboriginal descent had a series of experiences that resulted directly from alien impact. We cannot ignore these aspects in considering the current situation. They underline the social relevance of the past, the special problems that are a heritage of the past, with repercussions in the present".

The Australian Aborigines have played an important role in anthropological thinking about kinship, religion, economics and other aspects of culture. Many anthropologists have studied their way of life in depth and have thus contributed to our understanding of human behaviour.

For a long time these anthropologists looked at and studied Aboriginal culture as an independent, self-sufficient system, even though all research had taken place after colonization of Australia by a Western European nation.

It was not until approximately the 1950's that we find a significant body of literature dealing with the problems of culture contact between Aborigines and White Australians. Anthropologists as A.P. Elkin, (2) R.M. and C.H. Berndt (1945,1951), M. Reay (1945: Reay and Sitlington, 1947/48), J.H. Bell (1955/56), T.G.H. Strehlow (1957,1964), R.Fink (1957/58), J.R. Beckett (1958), to mention only a few,

pioneered in this field. They studied the history of Aboriginal-White relations and the new forms of Aboriginal communities resulting from this history. Yet, still in the early 1970's when plans for the present study began to take shape, the situation of Aborigines caught in the process of detribalization was rather poorly documented. Lippman (1973:13) still found that "Despite a continuous spate of news items concerning racial matters there is still remarkably little known of a precise factual nature of the aspirations or prospects of black Australians". And Schapper (1970:45), one of the first to study the Aboriginal situation in Western Australia with reference to chronic poverty, noted that "few studies have examined the nature and effects of Aboriginal social disadvantage and none has examined its extent".

This study then is an attempt to deal with a local community of Aboriginal people whose life is inextricably linked with that of White society. They live in the town of Carnarvon and the rural area around the town: the (lower) Gascoyne district. The majority of people are of part-Aboriginal descent and all of them have grown up in association with Whites either on sheep or cattle stations, in towns, or missions and government settlements.

Traditional Aboriginal culture to these people no longer is a self-sufficient frame of reference in looking at the world around them, or an independent condition of living. Making an inquiry into their way of life inevitably means studying their relations to and position in White society which is a prime determinant of their present way of life. The starting point of this study is the historical process that has led to the present sociocultural situation of Aborigines in the Gascoyne district. Secondly, attention will be paid to contemporary aspects of their life: the role of traditional Aboriginal culture, social organization and internal differentiation of the Aboriginal community, the place of Aborigines in the local economy and the educational system. Seperate chapters will be devoted to housing and problems related to excessive drinking. Description of the Aboriginal community in terms of the Aborigines' position in White-dominated institutional complexes is supplemented by data about the nature of interpersonal relations between Aborigines and Whites. Attention will also be paid to White beliefs about and attitudes towards their Aboriginal fellow citizens.

Throughout the research leading to this book I have assumed that it is vitally important to try and understand how Aborigines themselves look at things. I have attempted to gain insight into their expectations and needs, their opinions of White society and its influence on Aboriginal life, in short, into the perspectives they hold of things and people surrounding them. Of course, and this has been said many times before in the social sciences, participants in the social situations we study do not necessarily have a correct view of the conditions which determine their way of life. This, however, should not be taken as an excuse for not asking their opinion at all. The many inadequate and faulty representations of social reality by sociologists and anthropologists are not advanced as a reason for abolishing social scientific inquiry either. Moreover, in view of possible political implications of social scientific description and analysis, the ideas and aspirations of the people whom we study should be taken seriously. Failing to enter into a dialogue with Aborigines themselves social scientists may make the same mistake which Lippman (1973:14) observes in successive Australian administrations: "Basic lack of confidence in Aboriginal ability (my emphasis) has prevented their being allocated resources, both economic and educational, which would allow control of their own affairs and bring in its train a fair share of political power".

In considering the situation of Aboriginal people in the Gascoyne district, one inevitably looks for theoretical and conceptual models which fit it. The literature dealing with Aboriginal-White culture contact inquires into many themes. The ones most frequently discussed appear to be acculturation, assimilation and integration. On the whole, however, there is not a really consistent and coherent theoretical framework in these studies. This, of course, reflects the state of the social sciences. A closer look at empirical studies of Aborigines caught in the process of detribalization suggests that two conceptual frameworks may be promising to gain insight into the situation of such groups: the marginal situation (or sociocultural marginality) and the culture of poverty. As the purpose of my study is descriptive and exploratory I have not meant to test theoretical details implied in these concepts. The two terms have been considered as guiding or "sensitizing" concepts, not to be taken as exact models

for collection and description of a multitude of data and testing relationships between these, but pointing at important characteristics of the situation or process to be studied.

The idea of sociocultural marginality was first developed by Park (1937) and Stonequist (1937). The marginal man, according to Park (1937:XV), "...is one whom fate has condemned to live in two, not merely different, but antagonistic cultures". Essentially then marginality implies culture conflict and its concequences for the personalities of those involved it. In a review of the marginality concept Dickie Clark (1966) distinguishes between psychological marginality and the marginal situation. In doing so he refers to earlier attempts by Green, Mann and Kerckhoff to specify the nature of the link between the sociocultural situation of marginality and psychological concequences. Important aspects stressed by these authors are: the orientation of the individual members of the marginal group to their own and to the dominant group, the existence of a barrier of varying completeness between the two groups and the perception of this barrier by members of the marginal group (Dickie Clark, 1966:11-21).

Emphasizing the distinction between the objective qualities and the subjective interpretation of the marginal situation, Dickie-Clark distinguishes three meanings of the term. Firstly the marginal situation involves the hierarchical ordering of two or more groups varying in "degree of privilege and power" and in "inequality of status and opportunity" (ibid.:21). Secondly it refers to the consequences of the group situation for the individual members. The most important aspect of this meaning is the fact that "...the barrier between the strata restricts in many ways the individual's full participation in the life of the larger community" (ibid.:24). The marginal man is denied the enjoyment of the privileges of the members of the dominant group. Yet, the barrier is not complete, for if it were no marginal situation could arise. The barrier must be sufficiently permeable for the members of the underprivileged group to absorb at least partly the culture of the dominant group. Finally, usage of the term includes the variable subjective response of the marginal group's members to the objective conditions that they face. This concerns both their orientation to the dominant group, and to the barrier between them. The first aspect has to do with the question as to which one of the two groups is taken as the individual's group of reference. The second refers to the way in

which the individual conceives of the "permeability or height" of the barrier. The most critical aspects of this attitude is "...whether the individual is resigned to its existence and effects, or whether he rejects and rebels against it" (ibid.:26).

In the concept of the culture of poverty we find the same constituents; the situation in which a culture of poverty occurs resembles the marginal situation. Oscar Lewis (1966a:21) who introduced the term, states that the culture of poverty ".... implies both an adaptation and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position". In this concept too we find reference to a hierarchy of subgroups varying in wealth and in close association with this, showing differences in prestige, privilege and power. Between the hierarchical strata a barrier of some kind exists, for a crucial element of the culture of poverty is "...the disengagement, the nonintegration of the poor with respect to the major institutions of society" (ibid). The psychological consequences of the structural condition of poverty receive a good deal of Lewis' attention. In his view the beliefs, values, and attitudes of the poor in fact form the backbone of the culture of poverty, giving it the character of being more than a transient, situational adaptation. Referring to the subjective orientation of the poor to their own and to the dominant group, Lewis states that in the culture of poverty "...there is awareness of middle class values" (ibid.:23). He does not make sufficiently clear, however, whether the poor take the dominant stratum as their group of reference. Finally, and Lewis remains somewhat vague in this, the perception of the barrier between the affluent and the poor implies a degree of rejection of and uprising against the inequality between the two groups. Indications of this may be found in "...a hostility to the basic institutions of what are regarded as the dominant classes". Therefore, says Lewis, "...the culture of poverty holds a certain potential for protest and for entrainment in political movements aimed against the existing order" (ibid.).

The sociostructural conditions in which a culture of poverty can come into being, according to Lewis, are: "a cash economy, wage labour, and production for profit; a persistently high rate of unemployment and underemployment for unskilled labour; low wages; the failure to provide social and economic organization, either on a voluntary basis or by government imposition, for the low-

income population; the existence of a bilateral kinship system rather than a unilateral one; the existence of a set of values in the dominant class which stress the accumulation of wealth and proprty, the possibility of upward mobility, and thrift, and explains low economic status as the result of personal inadequacy or inferiority" (Lewis, 1966b:XLIII-XLIV). Under these conditions certain groups of poor people may develop a style of life, a culture of poverty, that is characterized by traits as: a lower life expectancy, absence of membership of labour unions and political parties, a low level of education and literacy, a high incidence of alcoholism, use of violence in settling quarrels, free unions and consensual marriages, a relatively high incidence of abandonment of mothers and children, emphasis on family solidarity, a critical attitude toward some values and institutions of the dominant class, hatred of police, feelings of powerlessness, inferiority, personal unworthiness (3). As I made clear before, no systematically planned attempt has been made in this study to prove the presence or absence of these traits. The reader may judge for himself whether some of the characteristics mentioned by Lewis are found in the Aboriginal community of Carnarvon.

In Australia the problems of poverty are not exclusively limited to Aborigines. As a group however they certainly constitute the country's poorest citizens. Ethnicity and class stratification in their case seem closely interrelated. Valentine (1968:126), who points at this relation in general, says that both stratification and ethnicity should be considered as primary dimensions for study among the lower class poor. His suggestion that fieldwork should focus upon identifiable ethnic collectivities is reflected in the present study.

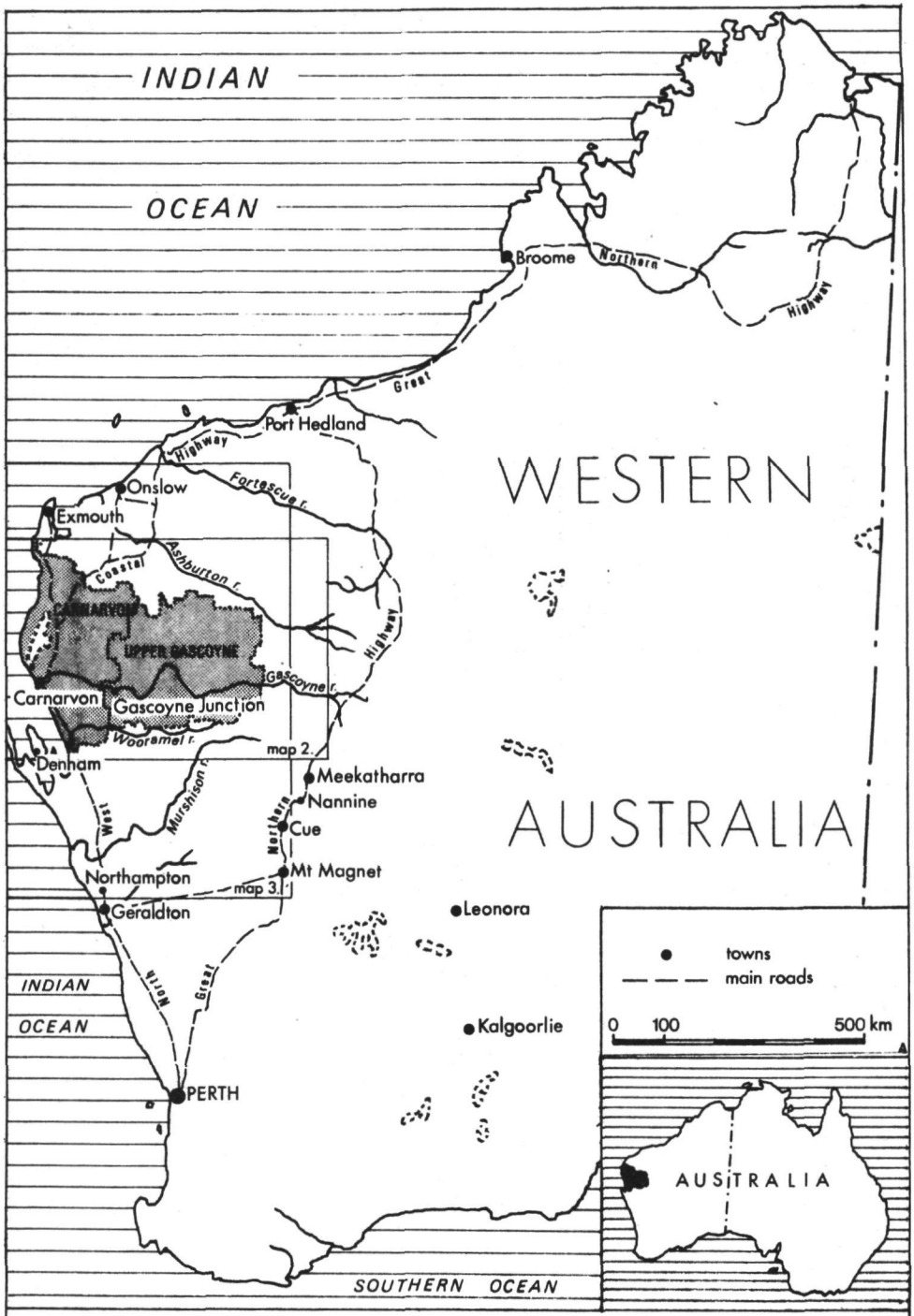
The social and material deprivation referred to in the concepts of marginality and culture of poverty are crucial elements of the situation of a majority of Aborigines in Carnarvon. In addition, both concepts fit into the approach taken in this study, which seeks to incorporate both the structural conditions of Aboriginal life and the perception of these conditions by the Aboriginal participants themselves. The latter aspect, moreover, clearly has political connotations as both Dickie-Clark and Lewis observe. The views that Aborigines have of their sociocultural situation can be of great importance in con-

sidering their potential for political action.

An interesting question in relation to the culture of poverty is whether the way of life of poor Aborigines is merely a consequence of lacking economic opportunities, of social and material deprivation, or is still based on a distinctly Aboriginal cultural tradition. H.Schapper (1970:50-51), for instance, says: "It is a matter of common observation that most Aborigines in Western Australia now are in sub-cultures of poverty with characteristics similar to such sub-cultures in other parts of the world... For understanding of the present Aboriginal situation in Western Australia it is relevant to examine studies of persons in similar situations in other parts of the world. The life-styles of Aborigines today resemble those of such persons much more closely than they resemble those of their forebears before the coming of the white man". Policies for improving the socioeconomic situation of such people, according to Schapper, should not proceed from "unique elements in the Aborigines' ethnic heritage", for "When a way of life is destroyed and bridges to acceptable alternatives do not exist, the inevitable result is alienation, despair, and the development of a sub-culture of poverty. The way out of this sub-culture is integration with the dominant society" (ibid:51).

The Setting

Fieldwork for this study was carried out in the town of Carnarvon and the district surrounding it. Carnarvon is situated in the huge, sparsely populated area of Western Australia north of the 26th parallel, an area commonly referred to as the Northwest. According to the 1971 Census, the Carnarvon Shire (i.e. the municipality plus the rural district around it) counts 6,786 inhabitants, of whom approximately 1,200 are of Aboriginal descent. The Shire covers a relatively large area (53,033 sq km) roughly measuring 300 kilometers east to west and 150 kilometers north to south. The town is situated on the shore of the Indian ocean and at the mouth of the Gascoyne river, about one thousand kilometers north of the Western Australian capital of Perth. It was founded in 1883, the year in which its site was first surveyed. Only a few years earlier, in the mid 1870's, the surrounding area had been settled by the first White pastoralists who took up land for sheep stations. Their settlement occurred a little more than 35 years after the



Map 1. Western Australia.

first exploration of that part of the country by a party of Whites led by George Grey.

The country surrounding the town is part of a sedimentary basin which marks the past location of an ancient sea (4). The land is very flat with a hilly range, the Kennedy Ranges, 160 kilometers inland. Along the coast the area consists of a coastal plain which is cut by the Gascoyne River, giving rise to fertile agricultural soils where alluvium has been deposited. Compared to the expanse of the Carnarvon shire the size of this fertile area is almost negligible.

The climate of the region is harsh, being hot and dry with an average annual rainfall of 20-25 centimeters. The Northwest, says Kerr (1963), is a land of semiperpetual drought. Due to these climatic conditions the development of agriculture in practically the whole area is prevented. An exception to this can be found in the irrigated fruit and vegetable plantations on the alluvial flats fronting each side of the Gascoyne river, and extending for a distance of approximately 16 kilometers from its mouth.

The desert and savannah vegetation of the country around Carnarvon offers possibilities for only sheep grazing. For a long time this was by far the main field of economic interest in the district. The town of Carnarvon really originated as the service centre for the sheep stations that had been established in the 1870's and gradually took up most of the land. The sheep industry, which has so deeply affected the lives of the Aborigines, has gradually lost its predominant role in the local economy. This has accompanied the general relative decline of the sheep industry in the north-west of the State. Overgrazing, erosion and consequent disappearance of nutritious grasses are some of the main factors in a vicious circle leading to decreasing numbers of sheep. In 1973 plans were announced by the Western Australian Ministry or Agriculture to cut down on stock numbers in the Gascoyne district, but this measure has been strongly resisted by the pastoralists.

Apart from the sheep industry and plantation agriculture mentioned above, Carnarvon depends upon a number of other economic activities. Among them are a salt mine, a prawning fleet and prawn-processing plant and two big transport companies with trucking depots. In addition there are a number of smaller business houses as garages,

stores, workshops, hotels and banks. The town is also the seat of various Government administrative agencies such as the Departments of Agriculture, Police, Mines, Main Roads, Public Works, Education. Carnarvon, then, with its predominance of primary and tertiary industries and very weakly developed secondary industry corresponds to the general economic picture of the north-west of Western Australia.

At present roughly one sixth of the total population of the Carnarvon shire consists of persons of Aboriginal descent, only a minority of whom are full-bloods. Contrary to earlier historical times when most Aborigines lived on sheep stations, the majority of them now live in the town itself. Many of the working men, however, are still employed on the sheep stations and thus are absent from home for rather long periods, while the women and children stay behind in town. The isolation of the stations from the town prevents them from returning home weekly, let alone daily.

Culturally the Aborigines of the district do not form a homogeneous group. As one might expect, an important factor involved in this is the local sociocultural environment in which they have grown up. There is a rather clear distinction between those who have spent the greater part of their life in the bush, on pastoral properties, and those who have grown up, or lived for a long time, in a town or on a mission or government settlement. Among the former one finds people who still speak an Aboriginal language, and in general have retained a fragmentary knowledge at least of Aboriginal traditional culture.On the other hand, people in the latter category have nearly all been more or less completely assimilated. (The reason for including people with such diverse backgrounds in the same study will be explained in a later section of this chapter).

The residential pattern of Carnarvon shows three main areas of Aboriginal occupancy, corresponding in some ways with the sociocultural background of the people.

First, there is the Aboriginal Reserve, a piece of land of about 2 hectares, well outside the built-up area of the town. The Reserve, which presents a view of great poverty, is under the authority of the Department for Community Welfare. Here, close to the banks of the Gascoyne river live roughly 250 people. Their dwellings consist of ten so-called transitional houses, tin and corrugated iron shacks, some tents and old caravans. Transsitional houses

are a substandard type of house made of unlined galvanized iron or asbestos sheets. Apparently the then Department of Native Welfare did not want to put (certain) Aborigines straight into a conventional type of home but thought they should be "trained" to make proper use of a house first. The transitional houses were designed to serve this purpose. Nearly all of the men who live on the Reserve make a living as hands on the sheep stations. During fieldwork in Carnarvon a group of Reserve people travelled to the Cane river some 500 kilometers north of Carnarvon where they attended an initiation ceremony in which also a young man who lived on the Carnarvon Reserve was initiated. This shows that traditional Aboriginal culture still carries influence in their lives. The Reserve is the home of most full-blood Aborigines in the district.

A second residential area for Aborigines is known as "East Carnarvon" or "Yankeetown". Here on a sandy, almost treeless flat outside the main built-up area of town live another 300 people. They, too, live in a motley collection of tin shanties, tents, old buses and caravans, and even broken down cars. The population is predominantly, but not exclusively, of part-Aboriginal descent. The men from Yankeetown, unlike those from the Reserve, do not work exclusively on sheep stations, but most of them do. Some, however ,have unskilled jobs in town. Traditional culture is far less influential with them. For instance, the initiation ceremony I mentioned was attended by only a handful of people from this part of the town. The residential pattern in East Carnarvon also differs from that on the Reserve. The land is not controlled by the government but divided into private blocks, some of which are owned by Aborigines themselves. In Yankeetown, moreover, one finds White people, some on their own blocks of land, others, mostly single men, living in the camps of Aborigines.

A third group of roughly 350 people live in the town itself, occupying houses of ordinary Australian standard. These houses are dispersed throughout the town and are either State Housing Commission houses, company houses, or privately owned homes. People in this group are almost exclusively part-Aboriginal, many of whom were not born in the Carnarvon district but in mining or fishing towns south of the Gascoyne district. In contrast with those on the Reserve and in East Carnarvon the majority of men of this group have jobs in the town itself. Usually these are

unskilled or semi-skilled labouring jobs.

The people not covered by the above division live in camps on the outskirts of the town and in transitional houses that have been built in little groups outside the main built-up area of the town. These transitional home dwellers closely resemble the people of the Reserve with whom they have many kinship ties. Finally there are some people, mainly children and old age pensioners, living on the Church of Christ mission outside the town and a number of Aborigines living permanently on the sheep stations, mostly single men or childless couples.

Data Collection

Although this study deals with a wider area than just the town (municipality) of Carnarvon, the fieldwork for it has mainly been carried out within the town boundaries. This reflects the contemporary pattern of settlement of the Aboriginal population of the district. In the vast area of Carnarvon Shire and the Shire of Upper Gascoyne, together covering more than 100.000 square kilometres, the great majority of the population lives in the town itself. In taking an Australian country town as the basis for one's fieldwork one usually has no problem in circumscribing its area. In the sparsely populated rural areas, often referred to as "the outback", there is a very clear distinction between the built-up area of a town and the almost deserted countryside around it. Even though I concentrated on the town I gathered information on the wider area around it. This concerned both historical data and data on the contemporary life of Aborigines on sheep stations.

As for the people under study I focussed on Aborigines. Interaction between them and Whites being part of my research I also interviewed a sample of White people in order to determine their views on and attitudes to the Aborigines. As mentioned earlier, the study is intended to cover all people of Aboriginal descent regardless of degree of assimilation. I believed that the crucial aspects of Aboriginal-White relations would thus be shown more clearly. Australian ethnographic material suggests that such a categorization is justified as the social distance between Whites and assimilated people of part-Aboriginal descent is greater than that between the latter and Aborigines who are still close to traditional Aboriginal culture. The situation in Carnarvon confirmed this. Even people who are of distant Aboriginal descent readily identify as Aborigines

and in general there are no insuperable barriers between them and, for instance, the group on the Reserve. Of course, as I will show later, there are Aborigines living in town who keep aloof from the people on the Reserve and East Carnarvon, yet such people seem to constitute a minority. Extensive networks of kinship run through the Aboriginal community directly or indirectly linking many Aborigines in town. Moreover, when in my interviews I explicitly asked them about this, very few people objected to being called Aboriginal. Henceforth I shall use the term Aborigine to cover all people of Aboriginal descent, unless specifically indicated to the countrary.

My first task after arriving in Carnarvon was to establish rapport with as many Aborigines as possible. Given the residential pattern the Reserve and East Carnarvon seemed to offer the best opportunities for this. Especially on the Reserve people live close together which facilitated meeting a relatively large number of people. When I was visiting one family other people would call round. Moreover, all daily activities such as cooking, eating, washing and the like are conducted outdoors so that I could easily observe other families and be observed in return. Gradually I became acquainted with almost everyone on the Reserve and in East Carnarvon. I joined them on trips into the bush to collect firewood, to the rubbishtip to look for useful things, to the town to shop, and to the pub to drink. I watched their card games, listened to their conversations, was a rather shocked onlooker at drunken brawls and when "courts" were held on the Reserve to discuss misbehaviour of members of the Reserve community I sat in the circle of participants. When the first meetings were held to discuss imminent initiation ceremonies further up north I was invited to join and from then on took part in all meetings and ceremonies preceding the rituals at the initiation ground. In due time I travelled north with the family-in-law of the young man to be initiated. Thanks to Reserve and East Carnarvon people I became acquainted with the people who lived in town many of whom have kinship ties in the two first-named areas.

During the first two months of fieldwork I collected material solely by means of participant observation including numerous informal talks and unstructured interviews. After about two months I was able to draw up a list of almost all Aboriginal households in the area. From this

list I then made a selection of households the adult (i.e.: 18 years and older) members of which I planned to interview more closely by means of a structured interview with open-ended questions (see appendix A). In this I inquired into factual matters such as knowledge of Aboriginal culture, kinship relations, housing, education, employment, income and participation in voluntary associations and asked for opinions about Aboriginal traditional culture, internal relations within the Aboriginal community, the Aboriginal position in the institutions of the wider community and relationships with Whites including such associations of Whites as government departments. As Aboriginal households are variable in composition, many consisting of extended families, I sometimes interviewed two members of the same household. I thus made sure of not only interviewing heads of households, who usually are of an older generation, but also young men and women still living in the camp or house of their parents. Since it was of great importance to conduct these interviews in a genial atmosphere I took extra care to be properly introduced to my respondents. Most of them I had become acquainted with during the first months of my stay in Carnarvon and to those I did not know well enough I asked to be introduced by a close relative or good friend. Because of the length of the interview often more than one session were needed to complete it. A number (19) of these structured interviews were held by an assistant, a White woman who during some years had become closely involved in the Aboriginal community and had made many Aboriginal friends. Altogether 168 structured interviews were recorded covering 105 households, making up about two-thirds of all Aboriginal households in the district. People interviewed were distributed among the residential groups in the following proportion: Reserve 44, East Carnarvon 52, Town 58, other 14. Respondents of the last-mentioned category were mainly people who lived in the transitional houses outside the Reserve and old-age pensioners living on the mission. Quantitative data on the contemporary situation and opinions of Aborigines are based on these interviews, unless specifically indicated to cover all Aboriginal inhabitants of the area. While doing these structured interviews I continued with participant observation which, in fact, remained a major method of data collection right to the end of my research.

Additional data on the Aboriginal community were collected by means of interviews with Whites working for agencies

dealing with Aborigines. This included the local branches of the Department for Community Welfare, the Health Department, the Crown Law Department, the Police Department, the Commonwealth Employment Agency, the State Housing Commission. If available, recorded data of these agencies were obtained.

As mentioned, interviews were also held with White inhabitants of the town. These interviews too were of a structured type with open-ended questions and mainly asked for opinions about and attitudes to Aborigines. 48 Interviews were recorded and an area type of sampling was used, so that respondents were selected from the different (White) residential areas of the town.

Special interviews were held with owners and managers of sheep stations in the rural area, with as main subject the labour conditions of Aboriginal stationhands.

Finally I collected data on the history of culture contact of Aborigines and Whites in the Gascoyne district. This was done in the "State Archives of Western Australia" and in the "Battye Library of Western Australian History", both situated in Perth. Here I mainly studied records of the various Government Departments dealing with Aborigines.

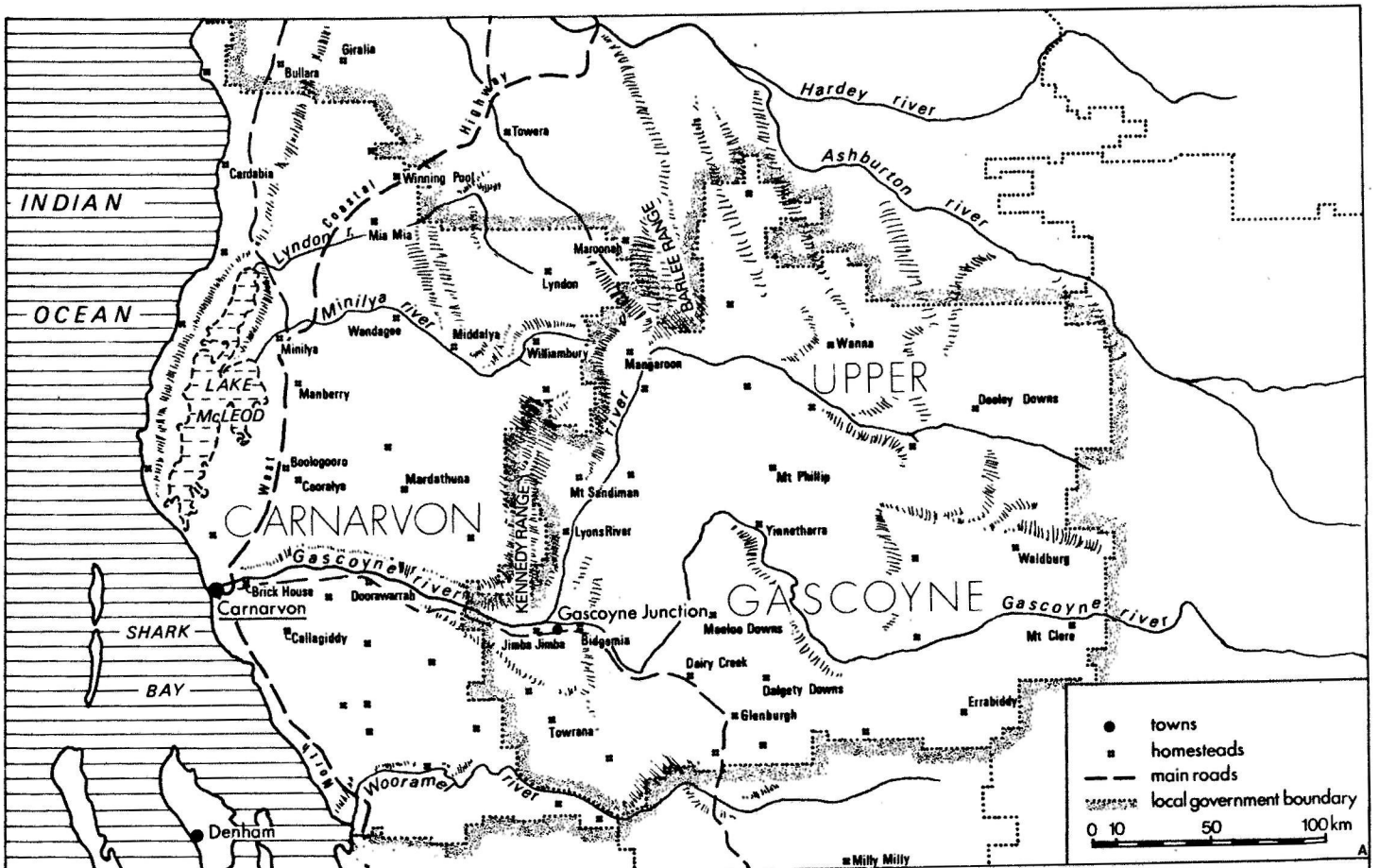
CHAPTER 2.

THE HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ABORIGINES AND WHITES IN THE GASCOYNE DISTRICT.

Explorations and first contacts

On the 5th of March 1839 Lieutenant George Grey discovered the Gascoyne River. The exploring party under his command had set out to explore the unknown country between Shark Bay and the North West Cape. Approaching the coast from the sea Grey and his men hardly explored the hinterland an undertaking which did not take place until nineteen years later. Although Grey during his brief stay on the land near the mouth of the Gascoyne River noted the presence of tracks of Aborigines and saw their fires during the night he was, ominously, "conscious that within a few years of the moment at which I stood there, a British population rich in civilisation, and the means of transforming an unoccupied (my emphasis, D.) country to one teeming with inhabitants and produce, would have followed my steps...." (Grey, 1841:quoted in Scott Memory,1967:12).

In 1858 a party led by F.T. Gregory explored more thoroughly the country along the Gascoyne River. Gregory's opinion on the suitability of the land for the establishment of pastoral properties was reserved and cautious: "...it would be very hazardous to risk flocks and herds beyond the head of the Murchison until the country has again been visited at a different period of the year... with regard to the quantity and distribution of the available lands, it will only be necessary to observe that with the exception of 30.000 or 40.000 acres at the mouth of the Gascoyne, there is no land worth occupying for many years to come to the west of the Lyons River..." (Gregory 1884:quoted in Scott Memory: 1967:20-21).In the diary of this travels through the area Gregory mentions several encounters with Aborigines. Although there were a few occasions in which Aborigines, according to Gregory, assumed a threatening attitude he made no mention of any serious hostilities between his party and the Aboriginal people. Considering the effects of the presence of Aborigines on the future settlement of the north-west of Western Australia Gregory, optimistically, remarked: "I would give it as my opinion that these people will not prove particularly troublesome to the settlers, if proper-



Map 2. Carnarvon and Upper Gascoyne.

ly and fairly treated. They are not numerous and appear very willing to take employ under Europeans, and will no doubt soon be made as useful as in the other districts" (ibid.). Although, probably due to Gregory's positive reports on the area , other districts such as those near Nichol Bay and the De Grey River were settled earlier, the Gascoyne district attracted its first settlers in 1876. They bought leaseholds and established the sheep stations that were to become the main causes of disturbance in the lives of the Aboriginal people of the Gascoyne district. As the numbers of sheep stations in the district grew, a police station was established at the mouth of the Gascoyne river in 1882. By that time a small settlement had developed which in 1883 was gazetted as a townsite under the name of Carnarvon.

The administration of Aboriginal Affairs until 1905.

The first decades after the establishment of the colony of Western Australia in 1829 were a relatively quiet period. Hasluck (1970:33) speaks of "... a small colony, with small ambitions, small flocks, small areas of cultivation dotted about the southern forests and scrub and small but pleasantly genteel towns occupied in chief importance by small official cliques drawing small but safe salaries ...". Settlement at that time was limited to the south-western part of the colony, the chief settlement being along the Swan and Canning rivers.

Although the colonists during that period clashed with the Aborigines, they did not experience the same opposition as was met with later in the more northern parts of the colony. Within a relatively short period they fundamentally destroyed the way of life of the Aborigines in the south-west and succeeded in "pacifying" them. Policies and administrative measures were basically directed at controlling the Aborigines and minimizing their "disturbance" of the White colonial society. During the second half of the nineteenth century the bulk of expenditure on Aboriginal affairs was used for the "Native Penal Establishment" on Rottnest island. (cf Hasluck, 1970:119). That the Aborigines did not really present a problem to the colony is suggested by the fact that until 1886 no comprehensive legislation concerning Aborigines existed. Until that time the legal framework for social interaction between Aborigines and Whites was laid down in acts and amendments relating to special aspects of the relations

between the two groups. Thus, for instance, in the 1840's there were acts relating to evidence given by Aborigines to the Courts, the establishment of a special prison for Aborigines, the enticing of Aboriginal girls from school or service, the summary trial and punishment of Aboriginal offenders. By the 1850's the south-western Aborigines had been brought under control, or at least no longer formed a direct threat to Whites, if one is to judge by the scarcity of references to Aborigines in the Government Gazette. (cf Hasluck 1970:42).

Even though relations between settlers and Aborigines in the south stabilized themselves, governmental policies concerning Aborigines continued to reflect a frontier situation. In the vast expanse of the colony until the end of the nineteenth century new areas for White settlement were opened up, causing clashes between Aborigines and Whites again and again. As Hasluck (1970:59) says,"Native policy in Western Australia from 1829 to 1890 was influenced largely by the problems of first contact, and there was little planning for the continuous leading of natives from one step onwards to another".

A new chapter in the relations between colonists and Aborigines opened when the more northern parts of the colony were settled. As will be shown in greater detail, the occupation of land by White settlers in the north differed in several respects from that in the south. Most striking from the point of view of this study, however, was that "The north-west was the first region in the colony in which the settlers had to face more than inconvenient opposition from the Aboriginal people who were being dispossessed of their lands" (Crowley, 1960:48). A crucial factor in the relations between the two groups was the dependence on Aboriginal labour of the newly established sheep and cattle stations. In 1886 the British Government had put an end to the practice of transporting convicts to Western Australia. From 1850 till 1868 well over nine thousand had landed in the colony and provided an important source of labour. When the pastoral and pearling industries in the northern districts expanded in the 1870's and 1880's not only had this source of labour been stopped but also a ban had been put "on the employment of convicts and ticket-of-leave men north of the Murchison River" (Biskup, 1973:18). Export of wool to British manufacturers grew into one of the main supports of the colony's economy and pastoralists became very in-

fluential in the formation of Government policies on Aborigines, and this, more than anything else, has determined the position of Aborigines in such areas as the Gascoyne district.

The first legislations (enacted in the 1870's) about Aborigines as employees regulated their hiring as pearl divers on the pearling luggers operating off the north coast of Western Australia. The first general legislation concerning Aborigines, the Aborigines Protection Act 1886, among other things, also provided for the regulation of Aboriginal labour. Unlike the Pearling Acts the latter Act did not prohibit the employment of Aborigines without contract "but only that no contract of any sort with an Aboriginal should be valid unless made in the prescribed manner and under certain conditions" (Hasluck, 1970:153).

The 1886 Aborigines Protection Act really evoked the spirit of the post-Darwinian era providing for the protection of a doomed species and offering hardly any positive measures for the integration of Aborigines into White society. The duties of the Aborigines Protection Board set up under this Act included the distribution of blankets, clothes and other relief among the Aborigines, the supply of medicine, rations and shelter to sick, aged and infirm Aborigines, the management and regulation of the use of all Aboriginal reserves, the protection of Aborigines from ill-treatment. "The Act made it lawful for the Board to bind by indenture any half-caste or other Aboriginal child having attained a suitable age as an apprentice until 21 years of age to any persons willing to receive such a child in any suitable employment. It made it lawful for a Justice of the Peace to order from a city or town any Aboriginal found loitering or not decently clothed ..." (Schapper, 1970:13). The Board also appointed so-called Honorary Protectors of Aborigines whose duties were to communicate to the Board their observation of the needs and treatment of Aborigines and to assist in the supervision of their contracts of service. Many of these protectors were recruited from members of the police force or the magistracy.

In 1897 the care of Aborigines which had until then been in the hands of the Governor, was taken over by the Western Australian Government (2). The Aborigines Department took over from the Aborigines Protection Board but its duties were the same. Until 1905, when a new Aborigines Act came into force, no changes of any substance were made in

the governing of Aboriginal affairs.

First conflicts between Aborigines and settlers in the Gascoyne district.

As nearly everywhere in the north the settlement of the Gascoyne by White pastoralists was accompanied by violent collisions between them and the Aborigines. Crowley, whom I quoted earlier on the opposition with which the settlers generally met in the north says, referring to specific areas, that "...an unknown but evidently large number of natives were shot down in the De Grey, Gascoyne and Murchison districts in the seventies and eighties (Crowley, 1960:64).

Undoubtedly the Aborigines in the Gascoyne district were very much at the mercy of the settlers. In theory they were protected by the laws of the colonial government but in this remote and sparsely populated frontier area effective control of the observance of the law, especially in the early years of settlement, was impossible. In the first six years after the arrival of the first settlers in 1876 the Gascoyne district did not have a policeman or a resident magistrate and it is very doubtful whether the arrival of these functionaries did change things for the better. "What could a northern resident do to help the blacks?", writes Hasluck (1970:109). "Imagine the situation. Perhaps sheep are being speared 200 miles up the river. Some white men have been done to death 100 miles down the coast and settlers are threatening to deal out punishment themselves. A black shepherd had been killed by tribesmen on a station 200 miles away in another direction.... Who is to go out in sweetness and light and hold parley with all and sundry - the Resident Magistrate, who has a score of other matters to attend to as factotum in a district bigger than the whole state of Victoria or than the whole of the United Kingdom?"

In the early 1880's the attention of the authorities in Perth was frequently drawn by complaints Gascoyne settlers made of "misbehaviour" of Aborigines in their district. Sheep stealing was the commonest complaint:

"During the last three months, in fact since this part of the Gascoyne has been settled, the natives have taken large numbers of sheep, besides 'sticking up' shepherds and robbing them of all that they had. Matters have proceeded so far, the natives: seeing that they were not checked in their depredations, that .... they attacked one

of my shepherds ... and speared him in two places... They are now so bold that they come right up to the camp and carry off the sheep almost before your eyes...as the government will not allow us to protect ourselves the least that can be done for us is, to give us an adequate police force" (DNA, 388A) (3).

Leaving aside the question as to the truthfullness of the settlers about the numbers of sheep that were actually taken, there can be no doubt that some of them had no qualms about killing Aborigines in relatiation for the loss of a sheep. Exact numbers of the Aborigines shot by the pastoralists will never be known; looking through historic documents, however, a considerable number of killings are revealed. A shepherd, for instance, reported to his employer: "... I had the occasion to shoot a native - they had been rather troublesome the last 2 or 3 days. I went to drive them from the camp: One of the men threw a spear at me which passed close to me. I fired and shot him through the chest" (DNA, 388A). On Minilya sheep station eight Aborigines were shot dead and a number were wounded by a party of Whites in retaliation for the death of two white shepherds (WA, 31-10-1882). Accounts such as these were numerous and drew the attention of the authorities. In July 1881 at the Governor's wish the Colonial Secretary's office instructed two police constables to investigate cases of stabbing White shepherds near the Lyons River and the shooting of an Aboriginal woman. The Governor wished the constables "to caution the natives that their conduct, if it continues, will call for heavy punishment" (DNA, 388A).

In May 1882 a deputation of pastoralists called upon the Governor of the state to ask greater protection for the settlers of the Murchison and Gascoyne districts "in view of the aggressive and hostile attitude of the natives of those districts" (WA, 23-5-1882). By mouth of one of the members of their deputation they stated that "His Excellency must be aware that a crisis had now arrived in the state of affairs at the North, and that unless something is done to put a stop to the depredations committed by the natives, some of the best settlers, which the colony possessed would be obliged to throw up their land and clear out of the district" (ibid.). An editorial of "the West Australian" bluntly revealed the real problems of the settlers: not the "attacks" of Aborigines were the source of their worries, they knew how to deal with that, for "If natives attack the settlers themselves, and imperil their lives, the course open

to them is plain enough. When spears are hurled at them, they can use their revolvers with impunity. The law will not punish them for defending life. But what are they to do when not their lives are attacked, but their property? The law does not permit to shoot them for committing raids upon property". The solution of the problem should be easy, according to the newspaper: "the simplest plan to settle the difficulty would be to withdraw all police protection, and give the settlers carte blanche to keep order in their own way" (ibid.).

In that same year 1882 Robert Fairbairn, a Resident Magistrate, was given instruction by Parliament to conduct an inquiry into the alleged depredations of flocks and assault on settlers by the Aborigines in the Gascoyne and Murchison districts, Specifically he was to ascertain how much of the hostility of the Aborigines had been provoked by settlers. Furthermore he should make it clear to Aborigines, by trying and sentencing Aboriginal offenders on the spot, that the government would not tolerate any misconduct on their part.

Even before Fairbairn reported his findings the settlers were on the defensive. The instruction to Fairbairn had infuriated them, suggesting as it did that the settlers might have brought the trouble on themselves by harsh treatment of Aborigines. The government, for instance, suspected that White shepherds employed by pastoralists had provoked the Aboriginal men, by taking their women. Apparently the pastoralists did not think much of their White employees themselves, for when Fairbairn later suggested that settlers should only employ White labour, one of the settlers replied that "White labour obtainable is the worst scum who left the Old Country for country's good. Suitable types, i.e., respectable young colonists could usually do better than follow flocks" (Scott Memory, 1967:56). On the whole Fairbairn's conclusions favoured the Aborigines. The losses of sheep were not as large as the settlers had made them out to be. According to Fairbairn settlers indiscriminately attributed loss of sheep to Aborigines not taking into account other causes such as dingoes or droughts. The Aborigines certainly did not conduct organized attacks on the Whites to obtain sheep and were not hostile as a group. Nevertheless Fairbairn severely punished Aborigines whom he found guilty of stealing sheep. Within a three months period he sentenced 18 Aborigines to a total of 44 years of hard labour at

Rottnest Aboriginal prison (DNA, 388A).

The disruption of Aboriginal life.

In considering the destruction of Aboriginal society in the Gascoyne district the role of the pastoral industry should be looked at more closely. In the economic structure of the district the pastoralists have played a predominant role.In fact, sheep stations during the first sixty or seventy years after the first Whites took up residence in the area, have been by far the most important economic activity. Life in the Gascoyne district, as in other parts of the Northwest, was strongly dependent on the pastoralists or squatters as they were called.

At first glance it seems hard to understand how such a severe disruption of the Aboriginal way of life could have been brought about by the establisment of station covering many thousands of acres and leading to a very low density of White settlement. In 1890, for instance, only 1300 Whites lived in the Gascoyne and Murchison districts, occupying an area larger than that of England and Wales together. The majority of this population, moreover, lived in small towns. Looking more closely at the course of events one can point at a number of factors that led to a severe and quick disintegration of Aboriginal society and culture. Considering some of these factors in more detail I will not strictly confine myself to the early period of settlement only, although many of the later social and economic patterns were formed during those years.

Rights of Aborigines to their tribal lands.

The 1864 Land Regulation Act recognized the right of the Aborigines "to enter, at all times, the unenclosed or enclosed but otherwise unimproved parts of any pastoral lease, for the purpose of seeking sustenance in their accustomed manner" (Biskup, 1973:18). Although this may have been true in theory, practice was completely different. In the arid country of the Gascoyne district waterholes and other sources of fresh water were scarce and a necessity of life for men and animal alike. As the pastoralists were only interested in the care of their economic assets, i.e. sheep, Aborigines were usually not welcome near these sources of fresh water where they might disturb the flocks. The "Royal Commission on the condition of natives" under Roth clearly pointed at this, expressing the view that "the right of the Aborigines to hunt on the unimproved parts of pastoral leases...was worth

little under the fast changing conditions: native game was disappearing and aboriginal waterholes ... being appropriated by the settler's stock" (Biskup, 1973:61). In fact, the squatters took the attitude that the Government should consider itself lucky that pastoralists employed Aboriginal labour and thus tolerated Aborigines on their leaseholds. In a letter to the Chief Protector of Aborigines (4) the owner of a sheep station north of Carnarvon threatened: "very shortly station owners will not take the trouble, worry and work of employing natives and...as they will not be allowed to camp in paddocks the Government will have to provide for all at great cost with extra police" (CSO, 295/01). The Roth Royal Commission realizing the importance of free access of Aborigines to tracts of land recommended large reserves. The Aborigines Act of 1905, however, limited the size of such reserves to a mere 2000 acres. In 1911 the Act was amended to provide for larger reserves in certain areas that were not under lease or licence from the Crown, generally the most unfertile and arid pieces of land in the State.

The powerlessness and rightlessness of Aborigines are illustrated by the attemps to create an Aboriginal reserve along the Lyndon River some 100 miles from Carnarvon. The Commissioner of police was very much in favour of such a reserve because it would save the police costs and time: the reserve would ensure, he wrote to the Chief Protector of Aborigines, "that there will be some place where a native can be ordered to go if he should prove an annoyance on any part of a sheep run" (DNorthW, 256/24). As appears from his letter the police were frequently called in by settlers to move on Aborigines camping on their land. The responsible authorities apparently acknowledged this right of the settlers to hunt the Aborigines from place to place. The Deputy Chief Protector of Aborigines, for instance, wrote: "The question of providing a camping ground for natives in the Lyndon district has been under consideration some time past, and the necessity for such has arisen through the advance of civilisation and the consequent incorporation of native camping grounds, and watering places used by natives for generations past within pastoral leases. Invariably these camping grounds have been established in the vicinity of good surface waters which, with the progress of settlement are regarded by pastoralists as the most valued portions of their holdings. The presence of the native in localities frequented by cattle for watering purposes is not looked upon with favour by pastoralists, it being generally recog-

nized that natives and the dogs which accompany them are a source of annoyance and detrimental to the well-being of herds" (ibid.). When after many protests from station owners who feared that the reserve would adjoin their property, a site was finally chosen (by the police) it turned out to be one of the worst and most inhospitable areas one could imagine. The travelling inspector of Aborigines expressed his disappointment with the proposed site and this, together with the continuing protest from pastoral pressure groups, made the Chief Protector of Aborigines abandon the whole plan.

Increasingly, then, it became difficult for Aborigines to provide for themselves in their accustomed manner. The best parts of their own land were prohibited to them, the flocks of the pastoralists competed with native animals for food, the dogs which Aborigines used for hunting were destroyed by settlers or police. This disturbance of the delicate ecological balance made Aborigines increasingly dependent on the solution which the settlers offered to them: employment on the sheep stations.

The use of Aboriginal labour.

As was indicated earlier the settlers in the north-western part of the state were forbidden to employ white convict labour. They therefore had to rely on the assistance of Aborigines to run their sheep stations. Although to this day pastoralists like to make out that they have rendered a service to the Aborigines by offering them employment, the truth is that the industry could not have survived without the use of Aboriginal workers. In 1940 the Commissioner of Native Affairs for instance declared that "In earlier days extensive use of native labour was made in the establishment and development of pastoral holdings and it is true to say that even today pastoral holdings could not be succesfully operated without native labour" (DNA, 605/40).

Use of Aboriginal labour involved both readiness on the part of Aborigines and coercion on the part of station owners. Biskup (1973:18) believes that it was but of their own free will that Aborigines started to work for the pastoralists: "whole groups of Aborigines became voluntarily and permanently associated with the various stations and gave up their roaming habits. This, however, seems only a partial truth, particulary considering the almost complete loss of rights to the use of their own tribal lands by Aborigines. Moreover, as will be shown in greater detail later, once

pastoralists had secured the "voluntary" services of Aboriginal employees, they tried to bind them by means of agreements which in practice only offered advantages to the employer himself.

Given the inevitability of the presence of White people on their land Aborigines entered into an exchange relationship with the former. There were certainly voluntary elements in this. Aborigines were rewarded for rendering services to the settlers and soon acquired a taste for the tea, tobacco, sugar, etcetera which was offered to them. They probably compared the efforts needed to obtain food in the traditional manner with the alternative of tending the White man's flocks, drawing water for his sheep, driving his horse or camel teams and in general doing all the odd jobs for which his assistance was needed. Despite the hardship endured by Aborigines through the hands of the station owners, in the long run they were realists enough to come to terms with the new possibilities (and necessities) of providing for themselves and their children.

On the sheep stations in the Gascoyne district Aborigines soon entered into employment, initially often as shepherd as that type of work suited their way of life. Such a procedure was described in a report of 1884: "A sheep camp was formed up the Lyons some years ago. When the sheep went up there a certain number of natives who belong to that part came in and were put on shepherding. Some have remained all along. Others have since run away. All natives employed here belong to the Lyons or Gascoyne Rivers and they are usually shepherding on or about the particular place which is their home" (APB, 1352/94). From another station the travelling inspector reported: "the place was settled twelve years ago by the present owner. Nearly all the oldest of the natives have been in his employ all the time. Some few have come in more recently. All are natives who belong to this part of the district" (ibid.). In 1894 on ten sheep stations along the Gascoyne River 283 Aborigines (men and women) were permanently employed and an unknown number were in casual employment coming in from time to time to do a little work in return for food. The settlers who wanted a steady, permanent workforce, often complained of the irregular working habits of the Aborigines. Thus a travelling inspector of Aborigines reported: "Mr. .... complains very much about some bush natives who camp in the Kennedy Range ... it is through these that he has trouble with the station natives. They come down and get the rations from the shepherds and

induce the latter to go away hunting and to corroborees; (another station owner) ..complains that (his Aboriginal workers) so often want to go away into the bush. He makes it a rule not to refuse any native when he asks for a spell as he wishes them to ask in all cases and not run away. But at the same time he says they come for holidays rather too often so that many of them spend a third of their time in the bush" (ibid.). In order to secure for themselves a steady workforce the station owners called in the assistance of the police to catch absconded workers and to return them to their employers. Shortly after a police force had been established in Carnarvon in 1882, regular mention is made in the "Police Occurence Books" of arrests of Aborigines deserting their employer's service. Inquiring into the legitimacy of this procedure I will next consider the use of labour contracts in Aboriginal employment.

Labour contracts.

As the demand for Aboriginal labour grew on the stations in the Gascoyne district pastoralists tried to bind their workers by inducing them to enter into a contract or agreement with their employer. The legal form of such agreements until 1886 was not clearly prescribed, some resident magistrates accepting verbal agreements and others written ones only. The Resident Magistrate at Carnarvon, for example, demanded that all agreements between Aborigines and their employers should be in a written form (Hasluck, 1970:151).

The Aborigines Protection Act of 1886 provided that contracts - if they were to be enforceable in the courts - should have a certain standard form and should be attested by a protector of Aborigines or a justice of the peace. Aborigines who entered into a agreement were entitled to receive a prescribed amount of food, clothes and tobacco. For those who did not work under an agreement no legal minimum was set, leaving their reward to the employer's discretion. Examining the parliamentary debate on the 1886 Act is quite revealing for governmental attitudes of those days. The requirement of attested, standard forms of agreements was not motivated by concern with the position of Aborigines but only by expediency. "To put it bluntly", says Hasluck (1970:155), "the Government suspected that some station owners were using the police as labour recruiters. When they wanted stockboys they produced some form of agreement, laid a complaint against the natives named and expected the police to go out and catch a station

staff for them. Hence the Government proposed that unless contracts were made and attested in the prescribed way and in compliance with the prescribed conditions they could not be enforced".

Working under an agreement offered no advantages to Aborigines. If they had reasons to complain about a breach of contract by their employer they could not call for protection by the law as this could only be done for them by a protector of Aborigines. Moreover if an Aborigine was not treated fairly by his employer who would see to it that he was given what was due to him? Usually he had no recourse but to flee to the bush. On the other hand the pastoralists who were very influential could easily use the system to their own advantage. A station owner near Carnarvon, for example, was accused of using agreements to keep Aboriginal women on his station: "They are always kept signed on and I was present the last time one of them was signed and the policeman did not ask her if she wanted to sign or no but just told her to come and make her mark.. .. Police should explain to them they need not sign... I am afraid a drop of whiskey has a great effect on some of the Police" (CSO, 295/01).

The Roth Royal Commission of 1904 heavily criticized the agreement system. It found that only a very small proportion of Aborigines were employed under contract which enabled the pastoralists to provide their workers with minimum rations. "And even when employed without contracts (Aborigines) were not free to come and go as they pleased for, strangest of all, the assistance of the police was obtained to bring back 'runaways' who were not bound by contract" (Hasluck, 1970:157). The commission found that not even 10% of the working Aborigines were employed under contract, although this probably fluctuated with time and region. For instance, in 1894 on the ten sheep stations mentioned along the Gascoyne River some 40% of the 283 employed Aborigines were working under a 12 months agreement. Most likely the incidence of agreements was higher in areas where there was a keen competition for labourers either among pastoralists themselves or between the pastoral industry and other economic enterprises. In 1901 a station owner who had earlier written to the Chief Protector of Aborigines that he considered "having natives signed under the present agreement a great safeguard for <u>their interest</u>" (my emphasis, D.) later wrote: "....last year <u>when the</u> police were over on my inland run, I signed most

of the natives shepherding there as other people had been trying to get some away" (CSO, 295/01).

The crucial role of Aboriginal labour in the pastoral industry.

As appears from the foregoing, Aboriginal labour has been extensively used in the north of Western Australia. The anxiety of pastoralists to have an Aboriginal labour pool available has fundamentally influenced the position of Aborigines in that part of the State. It might even be said that in pastoral districts like that of the Gascoyne the pattern of relationships between White and Aborigines was basically that of masters and servants and that everything possible was done to keep these servants under control. The pastoral lobby, as Biskup (1973:76-78) shows, has been one of the main factors affecting legislation on Aborigines in Western Australia.

Apart from the fact, that during the early years of settlement of the Gascoyne district White labour was hard to get, Aboriginal labour was particularly attractive because it was cheap. Already in 1887 Favenc, who can hardly be accused of a biased view in favour of the Aborigines, wrote: "All the work on the stations is done by the blacks, who are well fed and clothed, but their pay is nominal, a few sticks of tobacco being adequate recompense in their eyes for shearing and other work.....on account of their extreme usefulness stations are worked at minimum costs" (Favenc, 1887: 71).

Whether, as it sometimes asserted, payment of wages in the pastoral industry in the period from the mid eighteen eighties to the late nineties was practically impossible because of economic conditions, should be determined by specialized study. A fact is that between 1886 and 1894 there was a slump in the woolprices, coinciding with serious droughts between 1889 and 1892. The number of sheep in Western Australia which had strongly increased in the eighties was drastically reduced during the first half of the eighteen nineties and had not completely recovered until 1901. It may well be true that during such periods "Only the settler with extra financial resources survived" and "that it was impossible to run the properties in the normal manner" (Sturkey, 1957:1), meaning that pastoralists had to take recourse to unpaid Aboriginal labour. On the other hand, the sheep industry prospered between 1870 and the mid eighteen eighties. Yet, although the greatest progress

during that time was made in the Northwest, particularly in the Gascoyne area (Battye, 1923:32), no noticeable effects could be detected on the (monetary) rewards offered to Aboriginal stationhands. It may be most realistic to assume that non-payment of Aboriginal workers was a consequence of the basic endeavour of pastoralists to maximize their own profits and to take advantage of the weak negotiating position of Aborigines, rather than of strict financial conditions that made payment for labour impossible.

Throughout the history of the pastoral industry in the Northwest station owners were constantly on their guard against any circumstances or influences which could endanger their hold on Aboriginal employees. The owner of Point Cloates station, for example, expressed his concern about the bad influences of town Aborigines on his workers. The former he considered to be too sophisticated and therefore "It would be a good thing to put all natives out of townships or to reserves, unless they were signed and working for residents... Any reserves for such town natives should be in situations where healtly working natives such as are employed on the stations, could not be contaminated by associating with them physically or morally" (CSO, 295/01). An Aboriginal camp on the nearby Exmouth Gulf where, according to this pastoralist, men lived on the prostitution of their women on the pearling boats calling there, was a further eyesore, apparently not for humanitarian reasons but because these people "are a bad example to natives employed on stations who do not see why they should work, when the others get clothing, tobacco, food etc. without working" (ibid.).

So keen were the settlers around Carnarvon to get Aboriginal labour that in the eighteen nineties they sometimes went to the prison before Aboriginal prisoners were due to be discharged and tried to entice them into entering their employment. A (disappointed?) settler accused the gaoler of Carnarvon of sending discharged prisoners on to his friends where they were signed on as servants. The settler in question expressed his conviction "that the gaoler receives his reward from his friends for the services he renders them in procuring them disciplined labour..." and pointed out that "...the tampering with natives is a serious business to the settlers who can procure no other labour" (CSO, 1441/98). The scarcity of Aboriginal labour on the stations at times was so great that some station owners or

managers were accused of enticing Aboriginal workers from other stations into their service (DNorth W, 142/25). One pastoralist wrote: "other people had been trying to get some of (my workers) away, even going so far as to come over with a spare horse to take one native away" (CSO, 295/01). Not only men were sought after as workers, women were also widely employed, initially as shepherds, later as domestics, cooks etc. When in 1925 on Wandagee station an Aboriginal man who worked on another sheep station expressed his wish to marry one of the domestics there, the station owner refused,fearing that he might loose an employee. This case clearly illustrates the position Aborigines found themselves in; although no such things as labour contracts were still in use, it was possible for pastoralists to exert considerable influence over the lives of their employees. The travelling inspector of Aborigines who became involved in the case apparently could do very little but to seek support from the Protector of Aborigines, hastening to assure the latter that naturally he did not "desire to deprive any of the ladies in residence on their stations of their domestic help, they have often been at some pains to train". However, he added, "these girls must not be kept single merely for that purpose" (DNorth W, 524/25).

The provision of rations of food by the government to Aborigines who had become unable to provide for themselves also played a significant role in increasing the Aborigines' dependence on the pastoralists. Since the eighteen fifties the authorities in Western Australia had distributed rations to old, sick or otherwise disabled Aborigines. In the north during the eighteen eighties and -nineties it had become a practice for Aborigines to be rationed on the stations that were established in their tribal countries. This usually put the station owner or managers in a position to decide which Aborigines were eligible for rations and thus, for instance, by refusing rations to Aborigines whom they deemed fit to work, to control the supply of willing workers. Moreover, under such a system the pastoralists could use public funds, in the form of rations, to attract and hold the station staff they needed. Giving evidence to the Vernon Royal Commission on the pastoral industry in 1940, the Commissioner of Native Affairs recalled this function of the rationing system when he said: "In years gone by we did a lot of rationing on stations and I have no doubt that the Government of

Western Australia really developed the stations in that way" (DNA, 605/40). In 1909 the Aborigines Department adopted a stricter rationing policy in an attempt to eliminate the possibility of fraud. Aboriginal indigents now had to report weekly to the police who then issued a ration order. As this required indigent Aborigines to live near a town, a possible consequence could be that potential workers would accompany their old and sick relatives to the towns. Pastoralists therefore preferred to keep rationing on their stations and a number of them continued to charge the Department for the rations provided. The last-mentioned, however, hinting at the use by pastoralists of land previously belonging to the Aborigines, insisted that sick and decrepit Aborigines should be fed at the stations' cost since, after all, pastoralists had profited from the labour of these people when they were still able to work. In return for this the Department would not press for the payment of wages to Aboriginal station workers (Biskup, 1973:107-108). Reading documents about Aboriginal employment and the provision of food to indigents on stations, one gets an impression of expediency by pastoralists. At times of economic prosperity Aborigines seemed to be quite welcome on the stations. During the first world war, for instance, when prices for beef and wool were high, the number of officially registered indigents decreased from 3,319 in 1914-15 to 820 in 1918. When, as in the thirties, economic prospects were not so bright the Commissioner of Native Affairs complained of "the tendency of some pastoralists to rid themselves of the necessity to maintain natives other than those who can actually work" (DNA, 605/40). Some years later, during the second world war when there was great demand for Aboriginal workers, station owners found that the rationing of Aborigines interfered with their willingness to take employment: "the more benefits the natives receive from the department for nothing the more independent and insolent they become", pastoralists complained to the Royal Commission. The Native Affairs Department, according to some, "...would rather keep the natives and feed them than let them go out and work" (ibid.).

The lack of rights of Aboriginal workers and the influential role of the pastoralists in the exercise of government control over Aborigines' lives came to light very clearly during the period of national crisis in the second world war. At a time when considerable numbers of men had been called up for military service, the Federal Government

felt the need for a strict regulation of employment in industries which they considered to be vital for the economic war effort. General manpower control was introduced in 1941. The farmers in the south-west of the state particularly felt the shortage of labour and put public pressure on the authorities to force Aborigines to work on their farms. The Commissioner consequently "took steps to secure the co-operation of the Police Authorities in forcing all natives into employment" (DNA, 4/42). To achieve this end all rationing save that of aged and infirm Aborigines or orphan children was discontinued. For those who, in spite of these measures, did not seek employment the Commissioner had stronger means at his disposal: "... we are forcefully carrying out the instructions issued, and warrants are in process of execution for the removal of quite a number of indolent natives from various districts for disciplinary treatment at our settlements. In due course we propose to place these natives out in employment under supervision, and should they fail to show any evidence of the corrective disciplinary treatment ... they will be immediately returned to the settlement for further discipline". The Commissioner drew special attention to the severity of his measures. I doubt, he wrote, whether "elsewhere, except in Germany ... methods such as these have been adopted in dealing with the forced labour of natives"(ibid).

In the pastoral north of the State problems were of a different order.Unlike the situation in the south-west, where in the pre-war years Aboriginal unemployment was high and consequently great numbers of them had to be rationed, Aborigines in the northern districts had retained their jobs in the pastoral industry. This mainly reflected the cheapness of their labour and the lack of competition from White workers (5). Writing about this period, Crowley (1960:255) notes: "The extended use of native labour helped to keep the industry going. As ever, native and mixed-race labour was the cornerstone of the sheep and cattle industries in the northern districts...". Therefore, in the Gascoyne district during the war years, the problem for the authorities was not so much to force Aborigines into employment as to prevent them from seeking work outside the pastoral industry. Quite a number of Aborigines, for instance, found jobs on the banana plantations that had been established along the Gascoyne river. Here they could earn wages that were much higher than on the pastoral stations. While working on the plantations they could also

live close to the town, which to many was a welcome break from life in the bush. The pastoralists were quick to put pressure on the government to put an end to this state of affairs, especially as they feared a permanent impairment of their hold on the Aboriginal labour force. The employment of Aborigines on the banana plantations, wrote the police sergeant of Carnarvon, also Protector of the Aborigines, "..will have far reaching effects on the future employment of natives generally in this district... In the past months I have met with considerable difficulties in endeavouring to get natives to remain in pastoral employment ... and although there has always been plenty of work offering at an avarage of 30 shillings per week and keep ... many natives are reluctant to accept this employment" (DNA, 4/42). The Pastoralists Association of the Gascoyne district, through the Minister for Lands and Agriculture, also approached the Commissioner of Native Affairs. "There is considerable difficulty throughout the North-West", the Minister wrote, "..in natives being attracted to more lucrative employment and they have reached the stage where they know that they can sell themselves to the highest bidder and with the scarcity of labour cannot well be done without" (ibid.). Although the "Manpower" authorities had only laid down rules to keep people in pastoral or rural employment in general, the Commissioner apparently did not consider the banana plantations as a rural industry. Although he declared to be "..sympathetic to the position of the bananagrowers", he further stated:"..my first obligation is to the pastoral industry and I propose to assist all employers in that industry even to extreme action" (ibid.). In the Gascoyne area all Aborigines working on the banana plantations were ordered to return to the sheep stations, the Commissioner threatening them with drastic action if they failed to obey.

Working conditions and wages on the sheep stations.

Aboriginal workers on the sheep stations in the Gascoyne district for a long time got paid in kind and did not receive cash wages. In return for working they were given food and usually some tobacco. The quantity of the food provided could be solely determined by the pastoralists themselves as the Aborigines Protection Act of 1886 had not set any legal minimum. According to a report of 1894 on Brickhouse station near Carnarvon

"Rations to shepherds and water drawers are supplied on the following scale. A man and his woman are given sixteen pounds of flour, sixteen pounds of meat, two pounds of sugar, one quarter pound of tea and three sticks of tobacco per week. The other natives are fed by the cook or by the white man with whom they may be working. They are given good bread and meat with well sweetened tea three times per day" (APB, 1352/94).

In 1905 with the introduction of the obligation for employers to hold a permit to employ Aboriginal labour, the former were legally required to provide their workers with "good and sufficient" rations, clothing and blankets. Also they had to provide medicine and medical attention. Again, however, no legal minimun standards were determined and in practice the judgment as to what should be considered as "good and sufficient" rations was left to the discretion of the pastoralists. The Protectors of Aborigines (many of whom were recruited from the police force) for various reasons were unable or unwilling to keep a strict watch over the regulations. Moreover, the role of the Aborigines Department in this respects, as in so many others, could only be one of protecting the Aborigines from all too gross maltreatment and injustice. Naturally the Department was a child of its time and its policies frequently reflected the contemporary prevailing ideas. If on some occasion the Department attempted to introduce real improvements in the Aborigines' position various pressure groups were quick to thwart such efforts. One of the most important of these pressure groups was that of the pastoralists and the Department had somehow become strongly dependent on them. Pastoralists in practice had the right to drive Aborigines off their properties or, at least, to prohibit the use by Aborigines of the best parts of the land and therefore could put considerable pressure on Aborigines either to work for them or leave the bush for the town where they would become dependent on government rations. Thus pastoralists were considered by the Department to be of vital importance for the continued existence of Aborigines in their own tribal territories in the outback areas of the north. The pastoralists on their part strongly depended on Aboriginal labour and it should not come as a surprise to see that the 1905 Aborigines Act reflected both the interests of the northern pastoralists and those of the Department. The Act did not provide for the payment of wages to Aborigines, as the

Royal Commission under Roth had recommended; in return for this, the pastoralists should supply good food, clothing and blankets to Aboriginal workers and should also feed Aborigines who, because of sickness or old age, had become unfit for work. Thus the Government limited the number of Aboriginal indigents who could become charges of the State and the pastoralists continued to run their properties at low costs. Of course the Department gave different reasons for not pressing for the payment of wages to Aborigines. In 1914 Gale, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, for instance, wrote: "I have proved without fear of contradiction that in nearly every case when natives are given wages the money, or the bulk of it, is spent in strong drink, and, as this is the greatest curse to the race, I am in favour of them working out their own salvation without the temptation..." (CSO, 137/14). Gale's successor, A.O. Neville, probably prompted by the flourishing of the pastoral industry during and after the first world war, endeavoured to change the policy of the Department. Between 1916 and 1927 he made several attempts to force employers of Aborigines to pay wages to their workers but, for various reasons, none of them were successful. When Neville left office in 1940 there was still no wage legislation for Aborigines in Western Australia and, judging by statements of his successor Bray, this was not considered to be a serious shortcoming: "The general question of wages in relation to natives has not yet been considered as a practical proposition by the department. The time is not yet ripe. Thousands of natives on pastoral holdings are not acquainted with money as a means of exchange, and it is not in their interests that they should receive monetary wages. Their needs are relatively small and are being provided by their employers" (DNA, 605/40).

In spite of the inability or reluctance of the Aborigines Department to effectuate it, payment of wages, nevertheless, began to occur. First, of course, in those areas where there was the greatest shortage of labour and where, through a considerable loss of their own traditional culture, Aborigines had increasingly become detached from their own tribal territories. In the Shark Bay area south of Carnarvon, for example, already in 1904 squatters paid wages of two and a half to three pounds per month (CSO,1208/04). Pastoralists here had to compete with pearlers and fishermen in procuring workers for their stations. In 1925 wages for Aborigines in that area had even risen to eight

and a half pounds per month plus keep (DNorthW,359/25).

Although information on this subject is scarce, it can be assumed that it was not until the late thirties that payment of wages had spread to most of the stations in the Gascoyne district. By the end of the twenties on some stations in this district Aborigines earned one and a half pound per week. In the early forties married Aborigines on Minilya station, which at that time was known as having exemplary employment conditions, earned two pounds per week plus keep, single men one and a half pound per week plus keep. In 1947 wages in the Gascoyne were still at approximately the same level, however, unlike earlier days, some working women also got paid and received one pound per week.

Although figures on Aboriginal wages here mainly serve the purpose of comparing Aboriginal groups among themselves, it may be useful to give some figures on wages of Whites also. In 1914 the average weekly wage of male adults in Western Australia was £2 15s 3d and had risen to £3 14s 11d by 1919. The first State basic wage was provided for in 1926 and was £4 5s for men, with an extra amount added, among other things, for work in outback areas where people were deprived of certain amenities found in the city. In the depression years basic wages were reduced but had almost come back to the 1926 level when the second world war started: £4 2s 2d. In 1949 Federal basic wage paid in the metropolitan area of Perth was £6 2s, it had risen to £10 in 1951 and to £12 16s in 1957, while the State basic wage at that last-mentioned time was £13 12s 9d (Crowley, 1960:185,227,313,333,352).

The two tables below give an impression of the wages paid and the numbers of Aborigines employed at some of the stations in the Gascoyne district.

Table 1.
Numbers of Aborigines employed and wages paid to Aboriginal workers on sheep stations in the Gascoyne district in 1947. (Source: reports of District Officer of Dept. of Native Affairs. In: DNA, 30/31).

Station	Number of Aborigines employed		Wages (in pounds per week)	
	men	women	men	women
Doorawarra	2	-	2-2/10/-	-
Jimba Jimba	-	-	-	-
Lyons River	1	1	2/10/-	1
Mt.Sandiman	4	-	1/10/--2/-/-	-
Bidgemia	7	1	2	1
Glenburgh	-	1	-	?
Dalgetty Downs	5	1	2	?
Dairy Creek	2	-	2/10/-	-

Table 2.
Numbers of Aborigines employed and wages paid to Aboriginal workers on sheep stations in the Gascoyne district in 1951. (Source: reports of District Officer of Dept. of Native Affairs. In: DNA, 779/51).

Station	Number of Aborigines employed		Wages (in pounds per week)	
	men	women	men	women
Booloogooroo	-	-	-	-
Cooralya	3	-	4	1/10/-
Mardathuna	3	2	4-5	1
Manberry	1	1	?	?
Middalya	5	-	?	-
Williambury	6	-	?	-
Lyndon	5	4	4-6	1-2
Maroonah	10	7	?	?
Towra	-	-	?	-
Giralia	6	5	4-5	1-2
Bullara	-	-	-	-
Cardabia	3	-	6	-
Winning Pool	2	2	4-5	2
Mia Mia	4	3	4-5	2
Minilya	6	4	4-6	2

In interpreting these tables and the one below it should be considered that they are based on data collected by "Inspectors of Natives" or "protectors" who made brief inspection tours of the stations and collected their data from the pastoralists. Figures of the number of people employed probably only cover the more or less permanent workers, leaving out of account the people who were employed on a seasonal basis. Although no wages were paid at that time, it is interesting to compare tables 1 and 2 with one based on data from 1894 as this gives an indication of the considerable decline of Aborigines employed and living permanently on sheep stations in the district.

Table 3.
Numbers of Aborigines employed on sheepstations in the Gascoyne district in 1894. (Source: report of protector of Aborigines. In:APB, 1352/94).

Station *	Number of Aborigines employed	
	men	women
Brick House	13	11
Mokolo	7	5
Doorawarrah	3	3
Millie Millie	3	2
Mungarra	24	26
Jimba Jimba	10	12
Clifton Downs	26	18
Minginoo	12	12
Jerenoo	13	7
Eriville	16	20

*A number of these stations have been closed down or have since been amalgamated under a new name.

In 1953 male Aboriginal workers on 10 stations in the northern part of the Gascoyne district earned an average weekly wage of about five pounds. Only one man on one of these stations was paid the "award wage", i.e. the legal minimum wage of White pastoral workers, which at that time was £10/0/3 plus keep. In 1957 a patrol report of the district officer of the Department of Native Welfare, referring to roughly the same part of the district, found that of 16 stations visited 6 payed the award wage to Aboriginal

workers. He added that most of the stations paying award wages "employed half-castes only" (DNA, 132/54). Other employees on these stations, according to the same report, earned wages of averagely £6 plus keep.

Considering these figures it should be realized, as said before, that they refer to permanent workers only, saying nothing of a considerable number of casual workers who as a rule got paid less than the permanent hands. By the end of the fifties the majority of permanent Aboriginal workers earned wages of approximately £6 plus keep, while keep consisted of free meat only. Taking into account the fact that in 1958 "a normal average food cost per adult head..., excluding liquor or bought drinks of any kind, but including free meat or fish" was slightly under three pounds per week, Aboriginal labour could properly be called subsistence labour (DNA, 779/51).

The obligation of employers of Aborigines to hold a permit lasted until 1954. The threat of withdrawing permits was the only means at the Department's disposal to force pastoralists to treat their Aboriginal workers fairly. However, apart from the fact that it was difficult for the Department to effectively check working conditions on stations, a large number of squatters continued to employ Aboriginal workers without having a permit. In june 1939 of a potential Aboriginal labour force of 9,144 in the pastoral districts, only 2,720 were employed under a permit. Already in 1919 the Carnarvon based newspaper "the Northern Times" wrote: Under the laws dealing with the employment of Aborigines no person is permitted to engage them without a permit. The police inform us that the law in this respect is being broken in many instances in this district" (NT,31-5-1919). A list of permits issued at Carnarvon in selected years is shown below.

Table 4.
Number and type of employment permits (general or single) issued at Carnarvon and number of Aborigines employed thereunder. (Source: Annual reports of the Aborigines Department and its successors).

(See next page).

	General	Number of Aborigines	Single	Number of Aborigines	Total number of permits	Total number of Aborigines
1914/1915	11	100	5	5	16	105
1919/1920	11	100	10	10	21	110
1925/1926	4	34	10	10	14	44
1931/1932	3	44	3	3	6	47
1937/1938	11	73	28	28	39	101
1938/1939	4	22	24	24	30	48

Single permits referred to single, individually named employees, general permits merely mentioned a maximum number of employees a pastoralist was allowed to engage.

It seems as if employers tried to avoid applying for a permit whenever possible. If they happened to be caught by the police they simply forwarded the necessary fee and there the matter ended (CSO, 555/24). The permit system, writes Biskup (1973:107), "...was far from perfect...A protector was free to issue permits as he saw fit... and the Chief Protector could not overrule him". An unsuccessful applicant could always reapply in another district where the protector was more lenient. Most importantly however there was hardly a check on pastoralists who employed Aborigines without a permit nor on the ones who held a permit but flaunted the requirements of providing good working conditions. "...The effectiveness of the system depended on regular inspection, since the local protectors were usually either unable (as in the case of private individuals) or not unduly eager (as in the case of the police) to do the job properly. But there was no regular inspection between 1913 and 1925, and again from 1930 until 1937, and only for three years, from 1907 till 1910, were there two travelling inspectors on the staff" (ibid.).

As indicated before, payment of wages to Aboriginal workers was brought about without any effective action on the part of the Aborigines Department. It arose largely in a type of market situation, in which Aboriginal workers in different areas held different positions from a negotiating point of view. Thus in the Shark Bay area Aborigines were able to command rather high wages compared to workers in

other districts. In the country south of the Gascoyne River general labour conditions were also relatively good. The area was very sparsely populated with Aborigines whose traditional social structure and culture broke down relatively soon and who consequently lost the strong ties with their own country. In the 1950's it was said that "Natives in this area take the attitude that they will not work on a station where wages and conditions are not fair" (DNA, 132/54).

Although one should be careful of simplification, it can generally be said that loss of traditional Aboriginal culture and consequent loosening of ties with tribal territories, the numbers of potential employees, alternative avenues of earning an income, and the ability to organize themselves were determinants of the labour conditions of Aboriginal pastoral workers. As one travelled up north from the Murchison, employment conditions deteriorated, reaching its lowest point in the Kimberley district where still in the fourties no wages were paid to Aboriginal workers (6). The Gascoyne district in this respect was a relatively good area, especially in the south and the parts closest to Carnarvon. In 1957 the district officer of the Department of Native Welfare wrote: "...stations in close proximity to Carnarvon have a high standard of conditions for natives but from Middalya north conditions deteriorated, especially wages. It appears that the large number of natives available in the Ashburton area contributes largely to this state of conditions. Also the fact that the natives in the Ashburton area are still partly tribalized and will not move from their individual district makes it possible for stations to keep them on under inferior conditions" (DNA, 132/54). When in 1940 a Royal Commission inquired into the situation of the pastoral industry the commissioner's questions indicated that pastoralists were apprehensive about this "new freedom" of Aborigines in the Gascoyne district. Thus he asked the Commissioner of Native Affairs: "Have the better training and education of the natives in the Murchison and Gascoyne districts reduced their natural tendency to stay in their old tribal areas?" and: "Do you think the present generation of natives in the older and more established districts...the Murchison and the Gascoyne - actually know much about their old tribal districts?" What this meant to pastoralists he more or less explained himself: "Evidence was submitted to me in the North West that, since the introduction of the scheme under which the

pastoralists pay wages to the natives, many half castes are going wherever they can obtain the best conditions of employment. Some...are paid as high as two pounds and ten shillings a week and keep, and their tendency to adhere to their original districts is fading out rapidly. They are sufficiently educated to understand the value of their services and pastoralists have to treat them very cautiously, otherwise they will go wherever best employment is offering, without much regard to locality" (DNA, 605/40).

Despite these slow and small improvements in employment conditions it should be borne in mind that, even in relatively "good" areas as the Gascoyne, Murchison and Pilbara districts, the majority of Aboriginal stationhands, in comparison with Whites, worked under deplorable conditions. It was not until December 1968 that it became compulsory to employ Aboriginal stationhands under award conditions and this only applied to union members. As will be shown later, even today many pastoralists get ground the provisions of the Pastoral Industry Award and pay Aboriginal workers as they see fit.

The administration of Aboriginal affairs from 1905 to the present.

During this period the lives and social standing of Aborigines in Western Australia were largely determined by two laws: the Aborigines Act of 1905 and the Native Administration Act of 1936.

The 1905 Aborigines Act applied to four categories of persons: Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia, half castes who lived with an Aborigine as wife or husband, half castes who otherwise "habitually lived or associated with" Aborigines , and half-caste children, irrespective of their mode of life, under sixteen years of age. Under this Act the head of the Aborigines Department, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, became the legal guardian of all Aboriginal and half-caste children up to the age of sixteen; he also had ultimate control over all property of persons under the Act; marriages of female Aborigines to non-Aborigines became impossible without his consent. Aborigines were severely restricted in their freedom of movement and literally any place could be declared a "prohibited area" to them by the Governor of Western Australia (7). The latter could also order the removal, not only of individual Aborigines, but of whole families, to reserves established by him. In the sphere of economics the permit system, discus-

sed earlier, was introduced and this too "reduced the Aboriginal to a distinct status" (cf. Hasluck, 1970:157). It was an offense, for instance, for an Aborigine working under permit to leave his employment. Aborigines infringing on the rules of the Act could be arrested without warrant and be tried summarily.

Compared to the 1886 Aborigines Protection Act the definition of persons deemed to be Aboriginal was extended in the 1905 Act. People thus classified were clearly set apart as inferior citizens incapable of running their own affairs. Although the intention of the Act was phrased as protecting all Aborigines against "injustice, imposition and fraud" it rather served the purpose of managing the "Aboriginal problem" at minimal cost to the government and with minimal disturbance of White society. The 1905 Act, says Biskup, (1973:65)" was not a measure for the better protection and care of Western Australia's Aborigines, but an instrument of control, and ruthless control at that. It did not offer real protection of the tribal and semi-tribal Aborigines in the northern part of the state, for the land set aside for these people to live undisturbed by Whites was not to exceed a total of 2000 acres in any magisterial district. Reserves of this size were unsuitable for hunting and gathering purposes and rather served as a repository for Aboriginal "vagrants".

On the other hand the Act neither assisted the detribalized Aborigines of the south-west and later those in the north and the east, in leading the life of a capable Australian citizen. In principle Aborigines could apply to be exempted from the provisions of the Act, in support of which application they had to prove, to the satisfaction of the Minister in charge of the Aborigines Department, that they had severed all ties with their Aboriginal background. In 1923 only 41 exemptions were in force, covering between 150 and 200 individuals. The Department was reluctant to grant exemptions simply because this would mean a relinquishment of its strict control of Aborigines.

Between 1905 and 1936 the position of Aborigines was further affected by special amendments to Acts which applied to all Australians. For example, the "Health Act Amendment Act" of 1932 enabled the Chief Protector to request any medical officer to examine medically any Aborigine, and required Aborigines "to submit to such examination and to subsequent treatment that be orde-

ed" (Schapper, 1970:16). When in 1907 the Electoral Act introduced the principle of one man one vote Aborigines and "half blood" Aborigines were specifically excluded.

In 1936 the Aborigines Act was amended and called the Native Administration Act. Aborigines in future would be referred to as natives and the Aborigines Department became the Department of Native Affairs.

The 1936 Act did not offer any substantial improvement to the Aboriginal people. In fact, the category of persons legally defined as natives was extended bringing practically everybody of Aboriginal descent under Government control. Hasluck, (1970:160-1) in a slashing criticism, said that this Act was characterized by a "...steady reduction of the status of the native, and, though the intention has been protective, legislation has now gone so far that it may well be asked what purpose or plan there is or what possible outcome there can be from a system that confines the native within a legal status that has more in common with that of a born idiot than any other class of British subjects". The new definition of a native included all part-Aborigines except "...quadroons under twenty-one who neither associated with nor lived substantially after the manner of the full-bloods, unless ordered by a magistrate to be classed as natives; all quadroons over twenty-one unless classed as natives by a magesterial order; and persons of less than quadroon blood born before 31 January 1936" Biskup, 1973:171).

Except for minor alterations the provisions of the 1936 Act did not differ much from those of the 1905 Act. The Commissioner of Native Affairs, and through him the White people and their government, still had a very strong influence on practically every aspect of Aboriginal life such as employment, education, place of residence, marriage, guardianship of children, proprietary rights, medical care, etc. As under the 1905 Act Aborigines could only escape the discrimination of this law by applying for exemption, and even then they were still inferior citizens. Thus, most importantly, exempted Aborigines were still not allowed to vote, they could not be granted a freehold or lease of an area the same size as Whites could get and certain categories of them (of more than half-Aboriginal descent) until 1942 were not entitled to social services such as invalid and old-age pensions and maternity allowances (ibid:144).

The Department apparently deemed very few Aborigines

capable of living without its "protection" and was very chary with exemptions. Between 1937 and 1944 276 certificates of exemption were granted covering roughly 600 individuals, while at the same time 75 certificates were revoked (ibid.:190). In 1944 the Natives Citizenship Rights Act made it possible for adult Aborigines to apply for a certificate of citizenship and thus to gain the same privileges and responsibilities as non-Aboriginal Australians, including the right to vote in both State and Federal elections. To achieve citizenship they had to prove to a magistrate that they no longer associated with Aborigines except lineal descendants or relatives of the first degree. They had to show that they could speak the English language and were free from certain diseases. Furthermore, applicants needed two references to testify that they had adopted the life style of a "hard-working, well-behaving" citizen.

The requirements for exemption and later for citizenship rights clearly expressed a condemnation of Aboriginal culture and social life. Governmental discrimination against Aborigines was only relinquished if the latter were prepared to give up their "Aboriginality" and, to the satisfaction of a magistrate, prove that they lived according to the contemporary standards of White Australians: working regularly, living in a decent house etc. It is not so long ago that people of Aboriginal descent who desired to become responsible Australian citizens had to renounce their ties with Aboriginal friends and relatives, except those of first degree. Thus in the Carnarvon Court Records of 1959 one can still find examples of proceedings in which members of a group of people that had always been kept at a distance by the Whites, tried to convince the Court that they had "uplifted" themselves to the standards of these same White people. In his application a man stated:

"I am ...years of age and a full blood Aboriginal. I am living with my stepson at East Carnarvon. He is a shearer. He has a house there which I have to myself at present, as he is away. It is a good house, of iron roof and cement floor. There is a good kitchen with a proper stove, no. 2 Metters. There is no bathroom, but we use a tub. I intend when he comes back to do something about a proper bathroom". Another man pleaded his case as follows:

"I live according to white standards. I am married. Wife resides in ... in a house, pay 12/6 a week. I have four children besides two stepchildren. Earn about 30/- a day. Always send money home regularly to my wife. I can

read and write. I received some education as a child. I am making this application to enable me to right any wrongs in the past. I want to prove that I am capable of becoming a good citizen. I admit that wrongs were done in the past. Natives who were halfcasts came to my place. They were not full blood. That was when my exemption certificate was cancelled. They have not been visiting my place since then except on business. I do not associate with natives. I employ natives. I do not associate with them. I was convicted of supplying liquor to natives but that was 10 years ago. I served a period of imprisonment". This second application was opposed by a representative of the Department of Native Welfare, whose statement read:

"I have been to his home several times and have seen natives there. I do not know whether they were exempted. I was there three or four nights ago. Two other natives were there, I don't know them".

In the meantime, in 1954, the principal statute relating to Aborigines (the 1936 Act) had been amended. Its title was changed to "Native Welfare Act" and a number of the restrictive and discriminative provisions of the 1936 Act were repealed. The Native Citizenship Rights Act of 1944 also still applied to Aborigines but had been amended in places. The department responsible for Aboriginal affairs was now called the Native Welfare Department. The new Native Welfare Act reflected the growing awareness that it was unthinkable for a modern country to have a minority so strongly discriminated against as the Aborigines. Slowly it began to dawn upon the Government that legislation should do more than just control Aborigines and that more positive measures were needed to achieve their assimilation into the wider society. In 1961 Aborigines were granted the right to enrol for Commonwealth elections, and in 1962 they were allowed to vote in elections of the State. In 1963 the Native Welfare Act was again amended and some of its restrictive provisions were further annuled. Still Aborigines were not yet legally fully equal to Whites. Specific sections in general acts such as the Health Act, Liquor Act, Mining Act, Police Act still put Aborigines in an exceptional position.

In 1971 the Native Welfare Act was repealed just as the Aborigines Citizenship Rights Act. By that time the Western Australian Government had adopted a new policy which basically called for combination of welfare facilities for Aborigines and Whites in a single organization.

Having a special welfare authority for Aborigines only was considered to be discriminatory and the Community Welfare Act 1972 provided for an integrated welfare organization: the Department for Community Welfare. Simultaneously the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority was established "to create a small specialist organization which would foster, encourage and carry out those special services which are still an essential component of any programme designed to promote the economic and social development of the Aboriginal people" (Report of Royal Commission 1974:36).

The growth of a part-Aboriginal population.

Although the social barrier between White people and Aborigines was practically insuperable this did not prevent the occurrence of sexual relations between White men and Aboriginal women. Especially in areas like the Gascoyne district, where in the pioneering days White women were few, White men turned to Aboriginal women for their sexual needs. One should be careful in generalizing and interpreting the motivations behind such relations, yet it would not be exaggerated to say that these unions were primarily of a utilitarian nature, involving very little social contact. This particularly reflected on the children who were the result of these, frequently brief, relationships. Musing about his own background an old part-Aboriginal man said about these White fathers: "They just bred us and left us". Even if a man would have preferred a more durable relation with a woman, legislation would prevent this. Under the 1905 Aborigines Act it became an offense for a White man to cohabit with an Aboriginal woman.

As in all other aspects of their life Aborigines were rather defenseless against the misbehaviour of Whites towards their women, especially during the early years of settlement. By offering rewards such as food, tobacco and alcohol White men obtained the sexual favours of the women. Before 1905 the police could lay charges against these men only if alcohol was involved. Prostitution of Aboriginal women in this way occurred in the town of Carnarvon, in mining camps, on the pearling boats visiting the shores, on the sheep stations and in the outcamps. "In many cases", wrote a White man to the Chief Protector of Aborigines, "stationowners keep young native women and send their husbands away, this is done for immoral purposes and the women are worked harder than the negros. If a native has got a woman the stationowner wants he paints the native out to

the police as a 'sulky fellow' and he is then removed and the woman then practically becomes the property of the squatter, on the other hand if the native consents to the wishes of the squatter he is not painted out to the police and the employer has his wish gratified without the assistance of the authorities... One proof of the intentions of the stationowners is that the female servants on most stations are young, the old ones are hunted away"(CSO, 132/44).

The rightlessness of Aborigines, in this respect, was glaringly illustrated when in 1908 a jury discharged a man accused of raping two Aboriginal women on a sheep station on the Upper Gascoyne. According to the Northern Times, "... ..the evidence tendered by the three native witnesses for the prosecution seemed to point conclusively to a definite crime on the part of the accused ...on the other hand, the accused had but a poor defense to submit and in cross examination on his version of the episode responsible for his arrest was weakened in several particulars". The acquittal of the accused, according to the newspaper, had only one explanation: "That is the lack of credence attached to the native's evidence". It was added that "It will always be difficult to get the truth from native witnesses... the Aboriginal dialects have such a meager supply of words that it is an utter impossibility to interpret fully and literally a sentence of English into the native language... A fundamental principle of British law is that the benefit of the doubt shall be extended to the prisoner. This was done in (this) case, and will we trust continue to be done" (NT, 4-1-1908).

The position of the part-Aboriginal population which resulted from these voluntary or forced relations gradually became a matter of concern to the White West Australians and their government. As Biskup (1973:144) shows "legally there was a slow but steady erosion of their status from 1874 onward" in which a growing competition for economic resources may have played a role (cf Marchant, 1954). In attempting to prevent the " evil of miscegenation", as always it were the Aborigines who had to bear the brunt. Legislation did not only offer no protection to Aborigines but even made their position worse. By, as was briefly mentioned earlier, making continuous cohabitation a punishable offense legal authorities in fact punished the White father who entered into a more enduring relationship with the Aboriginal mother of his child but could do nothing against a man who just "bred and left" part-Aboriginal

children. The Department apparently did not deliberately plan this state of affairs but its legislation was interpreted in this manner by the Crown Law Department. Talking about the Department's inability to prevent White men from having brief sexual contacts with Aboriginal women, the Chief Protector wrote: "We cannot unfortuately prosecute in such cases... We had a glaring case last year when the Solicitor General ruled that "promiscuity" was not an offense under the Aborigines Act. We must prove "cohabitation" in its dictionary sense and that is practically impossible for it seldom happens" (CSO, 342/25). The few White fathers who took an interest in their part-Aboriginal children and wanted to have them with them, ran up against all sorts of obstruction. Thus, the Resident Magistrate of a small town in the Northwest wrote about a White man who wanted to send his half-caste boy to school: "Some of the parents now object to the boy going to the public school here... I have recommended Mr. D. to take the boy with him to the station... You will understand how awkward these questions are in a small community" (CSO, 1577/13). The majority of White fathers, however, hardly seemed to be interested in their part-Aboriginal offspring and left them entirely to their mothers' care. Although under general English law an Aboriginal mother could lay plaint against the White father of her children to maintain such a child, this was hardly ever done. Aboriginal people were not familiar with such procedures and the Aborigines Department offered no assistance whatsoever. In accordance with one of the sections of the Aborigines Act the Department could bring a charge against a White man in order to compel him to contribute towards the support of his child, but this only applied when the State was maintaining that child. Such then was the nature of the protection offered to Aborigines, the Department only coming into action when costs to the Government were at issue. But even in such a case the Department could usually merely threaten the man in question with a court case, as it would be very difficult to find someone willing to testify against them. Usually the Department speculated on the men's fear of publicity. Thus the Chief Protector wrote to a White father of part-Aboriginal children: "Action might have been taken against you, by the issue of a summons in order to enforce payment, but I think it's only fair to you as you will no doubt desire to avoid undue publicity that you should first be approached in order to ascertain if you are willing to

contribute" (DNA, 536/25).

Being unable to prevent miscegenation by taking action against White men the Department took other measures to meet public concern with the "mixing of races" and the growing number of part-Aboriginal children. At the same time as it increased its discrimination and control of adults, the Aborigines Department made a halfhearted and completely misdirected attempt at creating better conditions for the part-Aboriginal children or half-castes as they were called at that time. Policies towards these children were undoubtedly inspired by feelings of guilt as the Chief Protector's words illustrated. I think, he said "...it is our duty not to allow these children whose blood is half British, to grow up as vagrants and outcasts, as their mothers now are" (quoted in Biskup, 1973:142). His wish to have the power to take half-caste children away from their mothers and place them in institutions was realized in the 1905 Aborigines Act.

When Daisy Bates was appointed as travelling inspector of Aborigines to accompany the Cambridge University ethnological expedition to the Northwest , she was authorized to take part-Aboriginal children away from their mothers. In his instructions to her the Chief Protector wrote: "I am extremely anxious to clear the Native camps of half-caste children and I trust you will be able to do some very good work in this direction. Half-caste children removed from Native camps should be immediately placed in charge of the nearest police, or, where there are no police some responsible Government official" (CSO, 1023/10). To critisism of this system the Chief Protector answered: "If I allowed emotional sentiment to influence me in my work, within a measurable period numbers of practically white children would be living with the Aborigines. A howl of indignation would then be raised..." (CSO,411/14).

It is hard to believe that measures such as these were first and foremost inspired by concern with the position and future of the children in question. One only needs to look at the treatment of adult part-Aborigines and the lack of genuine Government support for the proper education of part-Aboriginal children during the first four or five decades of this century, to know that such was not the case (8). The motives of the policy sooner seemed to reside in moral indignation over miscegenation. In an era

in which racialistic ideas and a strong belief in the innate inferiority of Aborigines prevailed, it was intolerable for Whites to be confronted with the evidence of sexual relations between White men and Aboriginal women. When, for instance, the police constable of Carnarvon visited Bidgemia station and found a part-Aboriginal boy there he wrote: "..it seems a pity that something could not be done with him as he is very white and only walking about from native camp to native camp being neglected" (CSD,16/20). From another sheep station on the upper Gascoyne where a station owner was alleged to be the father of 9 part-Aboriginal children, a protector of Aborigines reported: "The whole district would welcome a cleaning up" (DNorthW, 343/25).

Children who were taken away from their mothers initially were sent to missions. At the time of introduction of the 1905 Aborigines Act the Roman Catholic mission at New Norcia, the Anglican "Swan Native and Half-caste Home" and the Anglican farmhome at Ellensbrook took care of these children (CSD, 228/03). Later in 1915 and 1918, respectively, the Government itself, under pressure of local Government authorities and parents and citizens associations, opened Aboriginal settlements at Carrolup and Moore River. The removal of part-Aboriginal children from their own people was one of the most callous measures of the Government. An Aboriginal woman of Dairy Creek station who was taken to Perth to testify in a lawsuit in which only Whites were involved, had her little daughter taken away from her there and had to return home alone. For nine years she heard no news about her child and the file on this case was closed with the remark that the girl was unfindable. Aboriginal parents from Gascoyne Junction who asked for their two children to be allowed to return home for a holiday received a reply that "These children should by now be getting some benefit from their stay in Moore River Settlement and to permit them to return at this stage would be the undoing of training they have received and difficulty may be experienced in having them sent south again. Furthermore apparently the Government is expected to pay the cost of their transport should the request be acceded to"(CSD, 16/20).

A change in policy occurred during the twenties when Aboriginal mothers were sent to the settlement at Moore River together with their children. This followed upon some notorious cases of miscegenation in the upper Gascoyne district. Referring to one of these cases specifi-

cally, the inspector of Aborigines remarked "Half-castes are an eyesore and comparative menace to the present generation and constitute a grave menace to our children and their children, through breeding under certain conditions less pigmented children. They are received only by their mother's race, on sufferance, but more completely when they adopt the methods and manners of the blackfellow, and with reservation when they take unto themselves Aboriginal wives or husbands. The removal of half-caste girls does not prevent the mothers from breeding further half-castes, we cannot, at present and it will always be difficult, in the nature of things, to punish the father, but the removal of the mother as well as the child will have that effect. We cannot do this wholesale but it is well worth the deep consideration of the Powers that be, it will be expensive at first, but will save much crime and suffering and expense later. This could be done ... one or two in each district and a warning given to natives that breeding half-castes means the loss of the woman for all time"(DNorthW , 343/25).

Shortly after having received the inspector's comment the Chief Protector asked the Moore River Native Settlement to accomodate a group of 50 women and their part-Aboriginal children.

The settlements certainly did not mean a "new deal" for the Aborigines. They were little more than prisons where the Department could place all people of Aboriginal descent who, in some way or other, were "troublesome" to the White people in their surroundings. Thus, apart from part-Aboriginal children and their mothers, the settlements housed Aborigines who in the eyes of the Department had misbehaved. In 1933 even "eighty one Aborigines - the entire population of the Northam Aboriginal camp - were dumped in the settlement by the police" (Biskup, 1973:164). Education and training of the children in the settlement was a mockery and girls and boys who were old enough to leave only found employment as domestics or farm labourers. The great majority of them at first opportunity went back to their own people and district.

In the early fifties the Department of Native Affairs gave up the idea of bringing certain categories of Aborigines together in closed institutions and Carrolup and Moore River were closed as Government settlements.

In the Gascoyne and adjacent districts, particularly the ones south of the Gascoyne River, in the meantime the part-Aboriginal population had increased considerably. In

the early fifties only one full blood Aborigine of the people that used to occupy the Shark Bay peninsula was still alive. Of the twenty three children attending the Shark Bay school in 1953 only four were White the remaining nineteen being of mixed White-Aboriginal-Malay descent (DNA, 171/53). As for the Gascoyne district itself, the table given below shows figures of the numbers of Aborigines and part-Aborigines in that area. Although approximations only these figures show the outlines of population trends in the Gascoyne district.

Table 5.
Aboriginal population in the Gascoyne district. (Source: Annual reports of the Aborigines Department and its successors).

	full bloods			part-Aborigines			Total
	M	F	C	M	F	C	
1920/21	180	80	30	8	7	1	306
1921/22	160	65	15	9	9	2	260
1925/26	75	56	30	11	7	10	189
1930/31	41	37	31	15	17	28	169
1933/34	45	45	40	15	20	30	195
1938/39	45	45	40	25	20	65	240
1942/43	41	40	42	26	22	87	258
1970/71*	137	123		491	360		1,121
1972/73*	145	127		565	380		1,217

*figures for children no longer given separately

As was shown in the foregoing section, the part-Aboriginal population was socially largely classified with the full blood people. On account of that fact there has never grown a wide gap between the two categories. Naturally, and that's why their position has been briefly dealt with, many of the part-Aboriginal people in the Gascoyne district have a different background than the full blood people who have mainly grown up in the bush on the sheep stations. Because of their experiences in mission homes and government settlements part-Aboriginal people have broken the relative isolation of life in the bush and have thus become important agents of social and cultural change in the Aboriginal community of Carnarvon.

Aboriginal life in the town of Carnarvon.

So far attention has mainly been paid to the effect of sheep stations and government settlements on the lives of Aborigines. As will be shown later, the greatest proportion of the present day adults in Carnarvon have grown up on a sheep station whereas a smaller number have spent a significant part of their childhood on a government settlement or on a mission. Others have spent their youth in a country town, the majority of them coming from towns south of the Gascoyne area, such as Denham on the Shark Bay peninsula, Northampton, Cue, Mt. Magnet, Mullewa and other towns in the Murchison district.

It should not be inferred from the above that the influence of Carnarvon town has been negligible. On the contrary, the sad evidence of its role is obvious in the complete or almost complete disappearance of the Mandi, Maia and Inggarda tribes whose country was or is closest to the town. Almost as soon as the town was founded in the early 1880's Aboriginal camps appeared on its outskirts as the following series of notes from the Carnarvon Police Occurrence Books reveal:

April 15, 1884 - Left station at 9 a.m. to visit native camps to see how they were getting on with measles and found them very bad lying about in all directions.

April 20, " - Private Constable D. reports at station, forty Natives sick with measles at the various camps he visited and only 9 with blankets.

April 23, " - P.C.D. and native assistent visited native camps and distributed blankets to the sick.

April 23, " - P.C.T. reports at station his having visited three camps along the bank of the river and found 10 suffering from measles and other cases. Distributed 12 blankets and the pills to the sick ones and also told some of the natives they would get some flour and tea if they would remain where they are.

The Aboriginal groups living closest to the town undeubtedly suffered most from the invasion of white men into their country. Disease, prostitution with the consequent spreading of venereal disease, dependence on rations and relief struck these groups most heavily. The

restriction of Aboriginal freedom to roam through their country was probably most effective in the areas closest to town where the assistance of the police in hunting Aborigines away from waterholes was most freely available. Arrests of sheep thieves could also be more easily carried out here. Of the numerous men who were sent to Rottnest Island for long-term imprisonment many must have come from these unfortunate tribes.

Since the founding of Carnarvon Aborigines seem to have always belonged to its population, albeit a "fringe" population. Already in the early eighteen eighties they were employed as police assistants and as labourers in stores and other businesses operating in the town. Characteristically Aborigines were barely tolerated by the White people. They lived near the latter's society but were definitely not a part of it. In 1906 the Resident Magistrate of Carnarvon in compliance with the wishes of the Municipal Council, issued instructions to have all Aborigines shifted from the town, except the ones in employment (NT, 24-1-1906).The council again called for the removal of Aborigines from the town in 1915. As one of the councillors said, according to the Northern Times, "...it was very detrimental to the interests of the travelling public and very undesirable to have the natives camp where it was, so near the town...the proper thing would be for the Department to proclaim an area away from the town. They knew from experience how many fellows had come to the town and through the Natives' camp being so close had become involved in trouble and convicted for various offences... Innumerable cases had gone up before the Resident Magistrate through the gins and the grog... The river was the proper place for the natives (NT, 4-12-1915).

As the original inhabitants of the area close to Carnarvon town died out, others, from countries further away, took their place. Many of them, one could say, breaking adrift from their own social and physical environment through the disruption of Aboriginal life by miscegenation, removal of children and adults to missions and government settlements, arrests and consequent imprisonments, wage labour, etc. Others came into town for rations and relief, for hospital treatment, or occasionally followed their employer into town when horseraces drew all the squatters of the district together for brief holidays. In the thirties increasing numbers of part-Aboriginal people settled in the town. Some of them were exempted and there-

fore not allowed to live on the Aboriginal reserve. In 1932 "a number of camps are in existence along the river bank in the vicinity of Chinaman's Pool. These camps are mostly occupied by half-castes who, apparently, do not come under the provisions of the Aborigines Act. They are of nomadic disposition and difficult to supervise..." the Northern Times wrote (NT, 21-7-1932).

As very few reliable data are available it is impossible to say anything about the numbers of people living near the town, nor to determine with any exactness when the town, as it is today, became the place of residence of the majority of the Aboriginal people in the Gascoyne district. Certainly the war years were very influential in attracting people into the town area. It was noted already that Aborigines in the early nineteen forties began to work for the banana plantations near the town. Many of them were ordered to return to the sheep stations but were probably succeeded by those who did not fall under the Native Administration Act. Some of these people probably came from Shark Bay, others from the Murchison district. An indication for the assumption that during the late thirties and early forties Carnarvon town experienced a new influx of Aborigines was the request of the Carnarvon Council to the responsible Minister to prohibit entry of Aborigines into the town. In June 1940 this request was acceded to and the Lieutenant-Governor declared "...portion of the Carnarvon townsite... to be an area in which it shall be unlawful for natives not in lawful employment to be or remain" (DNA, 375/40). One morning a week Aborigines could enter the town to get their rations from the Department of Native Affairs and do their shopping. For this purpose they were issued with a pass by the Anglican priest of Carnarvon. "Later, when the position is in hand" the Commissioner of Native Affairs said, "possibly the pass system could operate on two mornings... and possibly on one night a week to allow natives to attend the picture show if clean and presentably dressed" (ibid.).

Aborigines who did not fall under the Act could still freely enter the town but this too was an eyesore to the White inhabitants of the town. In 1945 the Anglican priest still disturbed by "the influx of the native population into the town... where the picture theatre, the post office, public telephone box and some of the business houses are more than liberally frequented",presented a new idea to the Commissioner of Native Affairs. His proposal was to built a special town for "half-castes" but the plan was not accep-

ted by the Department (DNA, 1180/45). It was not until 1945 that Carnarvon's "prohibited area" was officially repealed.

In the meantime Aborigines, including the part-Aborigines, still could not send their children to the State school and when sick had to go to the special "native block" of the Carnarvon hospital. In 1946 the Churches of Christ opened a mission some miles outside the town where Aboriginal children could be educated. The school was very successful and drew large numbers of Aboriginal children.

Already in the fifties the present demographic pattern of relatively few Aborigines living permanently on the stations seems to have been firmly established. According to a report of the district officer of the Department of Native Affairs, in 1957 on 34 sheepstations in the Gascoyne district only 91 adults and 31 children were more or less permanent residents. The other workers lived on the Aboriginal reserve or in the camps in East Carnarvon and were employed by the stations as the need arose.

CHAPTER 3

TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL CULTURE. ITS ROLE IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE.

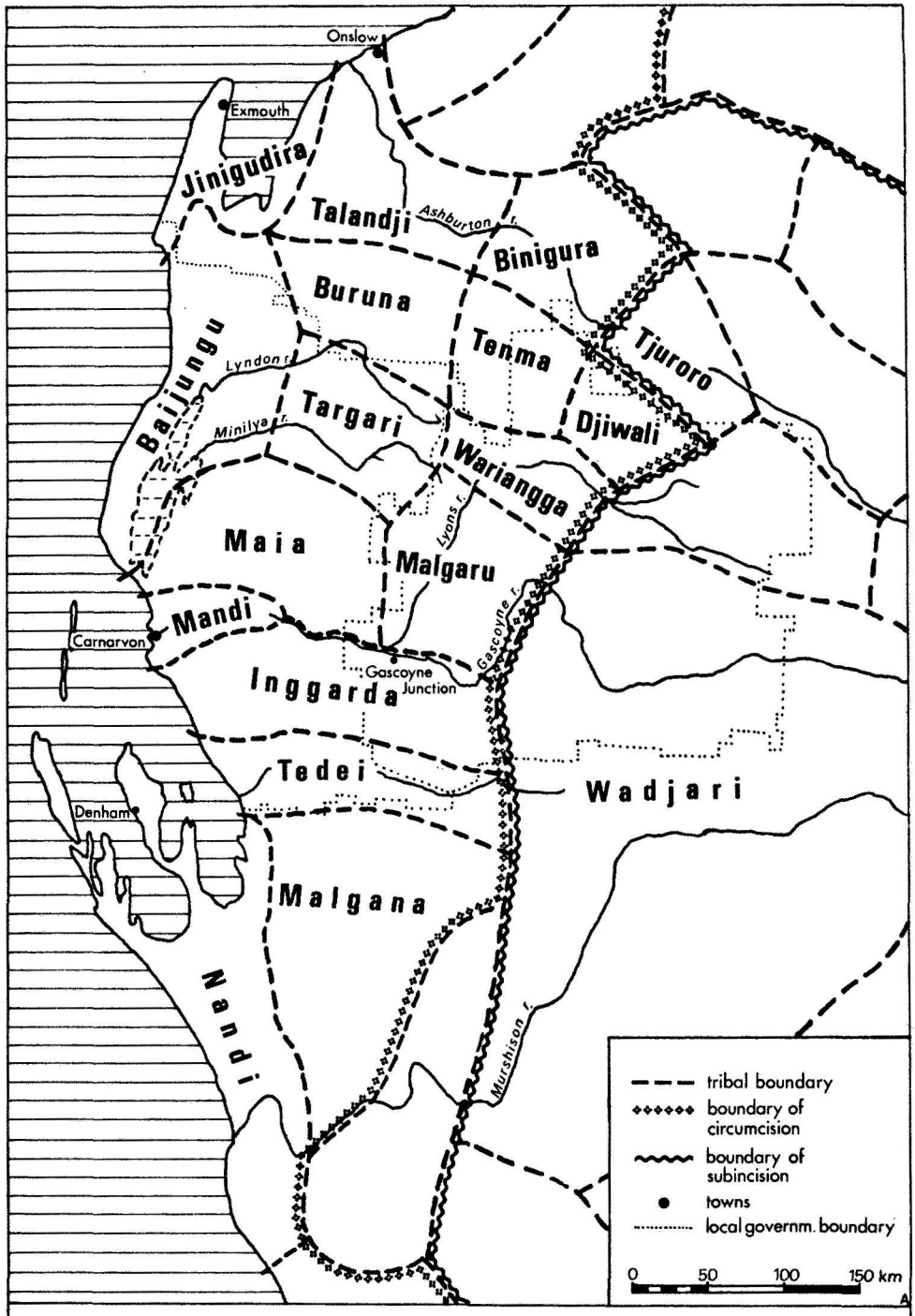
Knowledge of the traditional culture of the Aboriginal groups in the Gascoyne district is rather scarce. Very little in particular is known of the tribes that occupied the country in the immediate vicinity of the town of Carnarvon: the Mandi, the Inggarda and the Maia (1). (See map 3 on p.).

Radcliffe Brown (1930-31), who carried out fieldwork in the area in 1911, classified most of the tribes in the Gascoyne district north of the river as belonging to the Talandji type, Talandji being one of the language groups in the area. This group of tribes further includes the Noala, Binigura, Buruna, Djiwali, Tenma, Wariangga, Targari, Baijungu and Maia. These tribes were divided into hordes each occupying an area of less then 200 square miles. Their kinship system had four sections and, according to Radcliffe Brown (1930-31:212), "the marriage rule may be most simply stated by saying that the proper persons to marry are those whose mothers are cross cousins". Radcliffe Brown's observation of this rule seems to be confirmed by contemporary Targari informants who explained their marriage system to me as follows: "You always have to follow your mother, never mind about the father". The four sections were arranged in the pairs:

Banaga = Karimara
Burungu = Palyeri

This too was confirmed by contemporary informants of the Targari, Wariangga and Inggarda groups.

The tribes of the Talandji type had a totemic system with local totem centres and with rites for the increase of the totem. In the Noala, Talandji and Binigura tribes the term for totem centre was talu. In the southern tribes of this group the totem was called tauera. Each patrilineal clan was a separate independent totemic group. The clans, however, were grouped into a number of inter-tribal totemic divisions. In the area here considered there were altogether nine such divisions. The inter-tribal totemic divisions, moreover, brought different local clans together into what Radcliffe Brown calls cult groups. The totemic divisions, being aligned with patrilineal clans, were themselves also patrilineal.



Map 3. Tribal areas in Gascoyne district.

Source: N.B. Tindale 1974.

According to Radcliffe Brown the coastal area south of the Gascoyne river was occupied by tribes of the Nanda type, to which group, apart from the Nanda, only the Inggarda belonged. Of the Nanda type Radcliffe Brown writes: "About the social organization almost nothing is known: it would seem that there were neither sections nor moieties, but even this is not certain. The kinship system has not been determined". He was also unable to say whether the Inggarda had a section system. The people of this group could tell him the names of the sections of the Maia and Wariangga and claimed membership of one of these sections. It did not seem, he writes, "... that the section system was really existent as a functioning element of the kinship organization (ibid.: 213). In 1973 an old Inggarda informant told me that their marriage system was the same as that of the Targari with whom contemporary Inggarda people have many kinship ties. Because of the breakdown of the kinship system, however, it would be even more difficult today to establish whether it once was a functioning element.

One of the most characteristic features of the tribes in the coastal area north and south of the Gascoyne river is the absence of circumcision and subincision rites, a characteristic which they share with all the coastal tribes in Western Australia from the south-west right up to Eighty Mile Beach.

Aboriginal culture in the Gascoyne district has suffered heavily from contact with that of the Whites. Of the tribal groups that, to our knowledge, lived in the area at the time of colonization the Mandi, Tedei and Malgaru have probably died out. During my fieldwork I never came across people who claimed membership of any of these groups. Some,, mainly old people, mentioned the names of the groups concerned but added that they had disappeared. To what extent features of traditional Aboriginal culture have survived in the district will be dealt with below.

Of all the people I interviewed during the course of my fieldwork 48 percent could tell me the name of the tribe, or perhaps better, language group with which they felt themselves to be associated. The psychological nature of this association exceeds the scope of the present study. In the majority of cases, however,the relationship seemed to go deeper than merely knowledge of the name of the group. In informal talks, also, people would spontaneously say: "the Wadjari people that's my mob" or "Inggarda that's

my old gang". Taking identity as the conception that people have of themselves as distinguished from others, and in relation to these others, membership of one of the language groups is clearly part of Aboriginal identity. Although tribal organization has largely broken down, membership of one of these groups is still meaningful. In a number of cases family relations follow the boundaries of tribal groups or clusters of tribal groups. In that way nearly all the survivors of the Inggarda and Targari tribes are related to each other. Yet, it is not always easy to make out the significance and accuracy of claims of membership op particular groups. Reasons for indentification with them varied considerably. Sometimes it would be the membership of the tribal group of a person's father or mother, or any other relative that had claimed him or her. In other cases it would be the place of birth, initiation into a group or place of residence. Some people claimed membership of two groups. Also it happened that two brothers claimed membership of two different groups, one tracing membership through his mother, the other through his present place of residence. A woman who spoke the Inggarda language and said she belonged to that group also said: "The Mulgana from Shark's Bay area that's my gang too. We're all mixed breed here". Although it is not unusual, also in more "traditional" parts of Aboriginal Australia, to claim double membership in a language group, the complexity of group affiliation in the Gascoyne district seems at least partly a consequence of the severe disturbance of Aboriginal social organization.

The 48 percent of respondents who claimed membership in a tribal or language group were distributed between:

Table 6.
Membership of tribal or language groups. (Absolute numbers given).

Wadjari	26	Wanmulla[2)]	4	Barimaia	1
Inggarda	16	Pandjima	2	Buruna	2
Targari	7	Talandji	3	Kariara	1
Baijungu	7	Nanda	3	Njangamarda	1
Indjibandi	6	Wonggai	2		

A further 5 people claimed double membership in the following combinations: Bailgu/Njangamarda, Wadjari/Barimaia, Wadjari/Warriangga, Indjibandi/Kurama, Inggarda/Malgana.

In this distribution a familiar phenomenon appears: people belonging to an inland tribe have become more numerous in the coastal area as the original inhabitants of that area have dwindled. Today the Wadjari constitute the largest group in Carnarvon town, and the Wadjari word used to denote Aborigines in contrast to Whites: "Jamadji" is generally used to refer to Aboriginal people in the Gascoyne district.

Perhaps a more accurate indication of the extent to which Aboriginal traditions still influence contemporary life is the proportion of people speaking an Aboriginal language. Of the people of 30 years and older 42 percent said they could speak an Aboriginal language fluently, against 25 percent of those under 30 years of age. A list of languages that respondents could speak fluently as well as those that they only knew partially is given below. It should be noted that a few people claimed knowledge of more than one language.

Table 7.
Numbers of speakers of Aboriginal languages.

Languages that are fluently spoken	number of speakers	Languages that are partly mastered	number of speakers
Wadjari	22	Inggarda	22
Inggarda	14	Wadjari	17
Baijungu	8	Targari	7
Indjibandi	7	Indjibandi	8
Pandjima	3	Talandji	4
Talandji	4	Wariangga	4
Targari	3	Barimaia	3
Wanmulla	2	Buruna	3
Barimaia	1	Wonggai	3
Buruna	2	Baijungu	2
Kadidjara	1	Kariara	2
Ngarla	1	Wanmulla	2
Tjuroro	1	Bailgu	1
		Kurama	1
		Maia	1
		Nanda	2
		Njangamarda	1
		Ngaluma	1
		Wanman	1

The influence of traditional culture was further probed by asking people if they knew to what section they belonged. 31 percent of them answered this question affirmatively. Most of them were quite sure about their section membership and did not hesitate in giving the name of their section. A few others seemed less certain and only after some pondering could recall its name. It is significant to note that of the ones who knew about this part of the kinship system 58 percent were over 50 years of age, 22 percent were between fourty and fifty, and the rest were younger than fourty. None of the last-mentioned were younger than twenty-nine years.

When asked whether they knew the name of the sections to which their father and mother belonged, expectedly an even smaller proportion answered affirmatively. Only 12 percent of the respondents knew both the name of their own section and that of their parents. Their answers are given in the table below and afford an insight into the extent of the breakdown of the traditional kinship system in the district.

Table 8.
Section membership of respondents and their parents.

respondent's tribal group	section of respondent	section of respondent's father	section of respondent's mother
Barimaia	Palyeri	Karimara	Banaga
Baijungu	Burungu	Banagai	Palyeri
,,	Palyeri	Bananga	Karimara
Bidgi?	Burgulu	Palyeri	Palyeri
Talandji	Karimara	Burungu	Palyeri
Targari	Palyeri	Burungu	Karimara
Indjibandi	Palyeri	Banaga	Karimara
Inggarda	Burungu	Burungu	Palyeri
,,	Banaga	Palyeri	Burungu
,,	Banaga	Palyeri	Burungu
Kadidjara	Burungu	Karimara	Banaga
Wadjari	Burungu	Burungu	Banaga
,,	Palyeri	Burungu	Karimara
,,	Palyeri	Burungu	Karimara
,,	Palyeri	Banaga	Burungu
,,	Banaga	Banaga	Banaga
,,	Burgulu	Banaga	Karimara
,,	Karimara	Banaga	Palyeri

respondent's tribal group	section of respondent	section of respondent's father	section of respondent's mother
Wanmulla	Milanga	Banaga	Karimara
unknown	Banaga	Milanga	Burungu
Baijungu	Palyeri	Karimara	Burungu

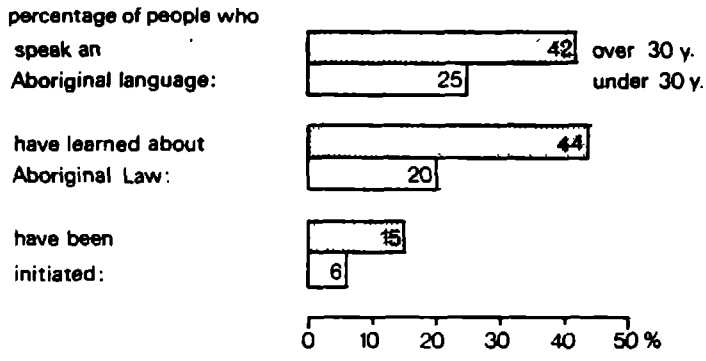
This table shows that even in the case of people who are relatively close to traditional culture, as their knowledge of the section names indicates, the kinship system has considerable broken down. Some people unequivocally expressed this, as remarks made by them show:

- As soon as your race (the fieldworker's, D.) came in, things got "buggered up".
- It's never been wrong in our Law, but since the White Law came in they marry anyone. Lots of pretty boys and girls have been killed for marrying the wrong way, but the Law is broken up now, they marry real relations. I noticed yesterday: two cousins camping together.
- On this reserve a lot of children are inbred. People not marry straight.
- They didn't teach me what line (section, D) I belong to. Nowadays they don't teach young fellas anything at all.
- Inggarda got no Law. Auntie and uncle can fuck one another as they like.
- People is not marrying straight, they marry relations too much.

The decay of traditional culture is further indicated by the number of people that have received instruction by their elders in, what they themselves call tribal Law. 38 percent of the respondents said to have received tuition of this nature. Broken down into age groups, 44 percent of the people over thirty had been taught about the Law against 20 percent of those between twenty-five and thirty. No one younger than 25 years had learned about the Law.

Finally, of the male respondents 13 percent had been initiated, that is, 15 percent of those in the age group of thirty years and over and 6 percent of the younger group.

To conclude this brief view of the state of traditional culture in the Gascoyne district some of the data are summarized on the next page:



Considering the data given above it is clear that much of the traditional culture has disappeared in the area, particularly if one takes into account that the data only refer to adult people of eighteen years and older. On the other hand, in view of the severe disruption of the Aboriginal way of life, particularly of its economy, it is surprising to find that anything of traditional culture has survived at all. The lives of a number of Aborigines in Carnarvon are still directly influenced by those traditions. This mainly concerns the people on the Reserve and to a lesser extent those in East Carnarvon. The people who live in the town itself, practically all of whom are of part-Aboriginal descent and have grown up in country towns, government settlements or missions are not immediately concerned with traditional culture. (Except maybe with fear of evil magic and belief in the healing powers of medicine men). Yet it would be premature to say that traditional culture has no significance to this group. Many of them have kinship ties, often of primary degree, with people who are still closer to traditional culture. The strict segregation, moreover, imposed on them by the Whites has put them firmly on the Aboriginal side of Australian society. That same segregation seems to be partly responsible, not only for the survival of Aboriginal traditional culture in certain areas, but also for the renewed interest in it. This could tentatively be said to be an expression of frustrated assimilation attempts in which Aboriginal people are trying to come to terms with the culture of the White Australians. In doing so many of them are confronted with barriers which prevent them from finding a satisfying

identification with the world of the Whites. In reaction to this and to symbolize their common struggle, Aborigines may stress the unique character of Aboriginal culture and may aspire to continue or revive it. All over Australia, not in the least amongst people in the metropolitan areas, we find symptoms of an upsurge of interest in Aboriginal myth, ritual, music, dance and handicrafts. This does not, of course,apply uniformly to all people of Aboriginal descent. As I will show later, for instance, amongst the majority of Aborigines in Carnarvon there is, surprisingly, no idea of an insuperable barrier between themselves and the Whites. On the other hand, in accordance with nation-wide Aboriginal interests in Carnarvon one also finds symptoms of a growing concern with their own identity, with their place in Australian society and with their future. Against this background it is interesting to consider the condition of traditional culture in the Aboriginal community and in particular its apparent revival culminating in the initiation of two young men in 1971 and 1972 respectively.

The most notable aspect of traditional culture in Carnarvon, of course, is the fact that it is a fragmented culture, largely existing in the memory of elderly people of different tribal groups. Certainly it is not a coherent design for living, providing answers to all aspects of daily life. Leading "Lawmen" in Carnarvon at the time of my research were a Wariangga, a Bandjima, an Inggarda, a Targari, a Wanmulla and a Wadjari man, which clearly illustrates the strong fragmentation. None of these men, moreover, could be considered an expert in the Law. As an old Wadjari woman said to me: "These Carnarvon people don't know nothing of the Law". Even some of the leading men in the Law, according to her, "were only learning recently". Despite the fact, however, that due to prolonged contact with White society, their knowledge was lacking in some respects, these "leaders" and other elderly people were keenly interested in the Law. Their way of life was still significantly influenced by traditional views of the world around them. They classified relatives according to the rules of the old kinship system, acutely aware of its almost complete disorganization, as they often spontaneously would express. They still had tribal names, knew whether they belonged to the emu, white cockatoo, plain kangaroo, or any other tauera and could still tell some of the myths which picture the travels of their tauera and

the sacred places along these runs. On the Reserve they held ceremonial mournings on the death of relatives and "courts" to discuss the misconduct of members of the group. To these people who, in a way, were most remote from the White people's culture and society, life was in a state of severe disorganization, not primarily because of their failure to come to grips with White culture, but mainly because of the discontinuity in the Aboriginal traditions. This brings us to a second important aspect of traditional culture in Carnarvon: the wide gap between the generations. Few of the things mentioned above which held so much significance to the old people and to which they felt emotionally so strongly attached, meant much to the young adult generation. Not many of the young people under twenty-five years of age knew anything about the Law, nor did they show an interest to learn. Unrestrained by a traditional order and living on the periphery of the culture of the Whites, these young men and women, more than anyone else, showed the symptoms of social and cultural breakdown. Feeling responsible for the Aboriginal community, the older people, particularly the Lawmen mentioned above, represented the group to the "outside" world of the Whites and in fact had established good relationships with some White officials and other people who had a professional or personal interest in the welfare of the Aboriginal community. On account of their own cultural background, however, they were quicker to perceive the problems within their own community than the very serious shortcomings in the relationship of Aborigines and Whites. Consequently they stressed the need for internal reorganization: once the anarchy in the Aboriginal community was checked, the position of Aborigines in the wider society could be improved. At a meeting one of the old men said : "We must go back to the Law; bring the young people back under the Law".Seen in this light the initiations by circumcision of two young men of the Carnarvon community in 1971 and 1972 gain a special perspective. Social control seems to have been, at least partly, one of its aims. Both young men who were initiated were notorious troublemakers, always ready for a drink and a fight. Before his initiation the father-in-law of one of them said: "We're gonna grab... and send him up north to go through the tribal Law, that will teach him a good lesson. And if he doesn't improve there the Onslow people have already promised me to send him further up north to Jigalong that's really the roughest

lot up there". It was noteworthy, moreover, that of the young men chosen to be initiated one was in his mid-twenties and the other one was thirty years old. Both of them were living with a woman and had children. One of the young men had come to Carnarvon from the north and belonged to the Pandjima people, a group that traditionally practiced circumcision. The other one, being an Inggarda man, belonged to a people that, like other Western Australian coastal tribes, had no tradition of circumcion.

The two initiations discussed here actually did not take place in the Gascoyne district but a company of Carnarvon people travelled north to the Cane and Robe rivers where ceremonies were led by people from that area. However, plans were under discussion to "open up a proper Inggarda ground" for circumcision ceremonies which would clearly mean a new ritual development in the district. Not everyone in the community was happy with this proposed change in the "circumcision boundary" as the words of one of my informants illustrate: "They're trying to put Law ground in the Inggarda country now but I told them: 'the old people had the boundary and you all know it. Why you thinking about that scheme now? Leave the Inggarda people alone, leave this Gascoyne area clear.' If they wanna go they can go to Onslow, go to Byro, if they wanna go into it, but must leave that boundary where he was in the first place".

During the preparations in Carnarvon for the second initiation, which I could witness, the problems encountered by Carnarvon leaders in encouraging a return to the Law were shown clearly. Very few men took part in the meetings that were held to discuss the proceedings and when ceremonial dances were held none of the Carnarvon men knew the songs well enough to act as a leading singer, a role which was left to a visiting Indjibandi man. Only a small proportion of the Reserve people participated in the dancing and singing, young men in particular being strikingly absent. "They're probably all down the pub". some of the elders gruntingly remarked. On the second and third night of the dancing even the interest of older people and children waned and the dancing cycle was prematurely finished. When finally, around Christmas 1972 the time of the initiation ceremonies had arrived twenty seven members of the Carnarvon community travelled to the Cane river to attend.

So far we have mainly considered the "factual" state of traditional Aboriginal culture, but what are the views that Aborigines themselves have of this aspect of their life? In order to examine these views, apart from gathering information through informal talks, three specific questions were included in my structured interviews.

The first one concerned people's beliefs as to the possibilities of preserving the Aboriginal Law. In answer to this question a majority of respondents said they thought it would be impossible to do so. In this respect again younger people differed markedly from older ones: 48 percent of people of thirty and over could see no future for Aboriginal traditional culture, against 73 percent of the ones under thirty years of age. Of the older ones a high proportion was uncertain of the chances for Aboriginal traditions to survive, 29 percent of them said they did not know whether it would be possible to maintain Aboriginal Law against 15 percent of the younger generation.

Table 9.
Percentage of answers to the question: Do you think it is possible today to maintain the tribal Law?

		yes	no	unsure
age	30 years and over	23	48	29
	under 30 years	12	73	15

Next, people's opinion was asked about the desirability of teaching children an Aboriginal language, either at home or at school. 62 percent of the respondents in answer to this question said that children should be taught an Aboriginal language, 22 percent were opposed to this and 16 percent did not know or felt indifferent to this matter. Typical comments of opponents of a revival of the use of an Aboriginal language were:

- Them days are gone; if you teach the kids the language they go back to the old days again.
- It won't be any use to them when they grow up.
- Teach them the same as the White people, that's the only way for them to get ahead.
- It would only take them back to primitive ways.
- That just helps to bring them down.

Those in favour were generally less outspoken in their arguments than opponents. It seemed as though emotionally they felt attracted by the idea but could not give specific, "hard" reasons for this. In the comments given by people in this category what one could detect most clearly was a longing for Aboriginal people to have their own identity, to show pride in their own culture, to be accepted on an equal footing with other groups in the community. To a number of the old people, particularly of the generation that had been brought up in a distinctive, easily definable culture, the language seemed to be a significant symbol of a world with which they were familiar. One fine old Aboriginal man, truly interested in the future of his people, expressed this when he said: "The young people don't learn our language anymore. I don't know what's to become of us". People were well aware of the fact that to some the Aboriginal language was a stigma, which they wanted to rid themselves of as soon as possible. Their comments showed this quite clearly:

- Some people are stuck up and say: "don't talk that Blackfellas talk". Some people are ashamed to talk the language.
- There's hardly anybody now that's interested to talk that language. An old man here said to me: "don't talk that Black man's language, I don't know that", but I think that people should speak their language.

Statements such as these may in fact be more revealing of the White society. They show the pressure exerted on people to conform to White standards and to have contempt for the Aboriginal way of life. Social pressure of this kind is, of course, still frequently met with in Australian society. But Aboriginal people, and certainly not only active opinion leaders, appear to be becoming more self-confident, more willing to stand up to White stereotypes. In their search for identity people sometimes took immigrant groups as an example:

- Kids should learn their own language, but they laugh at you. It's the same as the Italians, they still speak their own language.

Sometimes also, people referred to the situation at school where pupils were taught foreign languages:

- The language shouldn't die out; if they can teach German

at school why not an Aboriginal language?

Although a majority was in favour of retaining their own Aboriginal language, they were aware that several factors work against this. Frequently unwillingness of children was mentioned as one of the main impediments:

- They (the children D.) should learn but they laugh at you.
- People have been trying to teach the kids, but they got new ideas now, they're not interested in the language.
- Some kids won't, they'd sooner speak the Whites' lingo.
- The younger generation doesn't try to learn it. One of my sons wants to learn it, the other two are embarrassed when someone talks to them like that. It's the same as with the Slavs (Yougoslavs D.), for instance, it should be taught the young ones, but some of them say: we're not living in the stone age.

Inquiry into the attitudes of Aborigines towards traditional culture was further made by asking whether one thought that the Aboriginal Law should be maintained. Of the over thirty years olds a majority answered this question affirmatively, while for the younger ones the reverse was the case.

Table 10.
Percentage of answers to the question: Do you think the tribal Law should be maintained?

		yes	no	unsure
age	30 years and over	57	26	17
	under 30 years	22	64	14

Analysis of answers to questions relating to the Law showed that a majority of people associated tribal Law with initiation ceremonies and a smaller number with marriage rules. This, of course, is not surprising among people whose knowledge of the cultural traditions of their forebears in many cases has become fragmentary only. The most spectacular elements are then often seen as the crucial aspects of the cultural system of the past. Of the people whose answer to the above question is classified as "unsure" some just did not know an answer to the question, others said that it would depend on persons and circumstances. The

last-mentioned gave answers like:

- Only for the ones that want it.
- If they're happy about it to keep their own tribal way it's allright.
- I think they should make out for themselves; a certain amount of it should be kept going, a lot of it should be scrubbed.
- Parts of it probably.

Certain answers in this category pointed at the fact that the respondent clearly placed himself outside the group for whom Aboriginal Law had any relevance. In that way the question served the purpose of indicating the reality of different categories of Aborigines.

The people who were against clinging to the old ways and rules of traditional Aboriginal life, generally felt that these were incompatible with the requirements of life in present-day Australia. Their opposition to Aboriginal traditions may point at the readiness to assimilate into White society:

- It is 1973 now and we are treated as Whites. The White people come to our home and we visit them. The young people don't want the Law to come back. We got our "free citizens" now. We are White men. We try to show our respect for the White people and the White people show their respect to us.
- They should give it away because they class us White men.
- It's gradually disappearing with the younger generation, they should forget about it, they're brought up with the Whites.
- It won't be any use to the young people when they grow up.
- I think it would be good if it was stopped because when it was going there was a terrible lot of strife...whereas lately we haven't had any of this type of trouble. You don't get young blokes leaving town because they were frightened...because who were they going to be given to? Now at least they have a freedom of choice.
- This giving away of girls that's all stupid, silly. Being forced to marry is no good, that's how the fight starts. It is finished around here now. The younger generation gives it up, tries to live different now.
- I don't want to go through the Law. I been brought up the Whitefella's way; I would refuse. It's allright for uncivilized people. I think they should leave the Carnarvon

boys alone. The old people had their days. It's allright for Onslow people, they're still tribal people. The young people won't listen to the older ones any more. The old people complain about us young people but I tell them you had your days. I say the Law is finished here, but they're starting up again.

- Young blokes are not interested. I wouldn't like to go through the Law, I'd run away.
- It actually is dying out, isn't it? Even Onslow, they have forgotten it now, but somehow they got it going again. If they want to improve themselves I think they have to give it away. It's not helping them. A lot of young fellows are not interested in it, they get dragged into it anyway, even against their own will, that's why I think it should be pulled up.
- Now that the Jamadji people have got their citizenship rights they should forget about the Law. They should try to fit in with the White people. The Law drags them back. If the old fellows like to go on with it, let them do it, but they shouldn't drag the young ones with them.

One of the arguments of those in favour of the Aboriginal Law is that only the Law, in their eyes, will be able to reduce the social disorganization they experience. As will be shown later the Aboriginal community of Carnarvon indeed shows signs of social disorder and many people are aware of the need for a change in this. Some answers, pointing at the Law as a possible remedy against disorganization, are given below:

- They should keep it going; the Law keeps you happy you know. People is dancing. It is really happy, better than looking at the drunkards. I did enjoy myself at the Jalburu (initiation, D.).
- I think it's allright. What I remember and have seen with boys that have gone trough the Law there's not so much delinquency. Now you got the generation that don't want to work. I reckon it should still be carried out no matter whether they are partly White or what. I wouldn't be against my boys going through the Law.
- I think they should. It will quiten the young ones. They keep ducking and ducking.
- If the Law dies out you'll have a lot of wild Coloured people. The Law up north teaches them a good lesson.

A woman who has opposed to clinging to the tribal Law, gave

as a reason precisely that it did not work as a mechanism to maintain order in the community:

- I wouldn't let my boys go through the Law. I think they're better of now. What's the use of it? Look at ..., it never made him any good. They're suppose to settle down, but nothing....supposed to make them good.

Another major argument in favour of the Law resides in, what was mentioned earlier, a desire to stress a common Aboriginal identity, a uniqueness vis-à-vis the White people. The relatively high percentage of over-thirty-years-olds in favour of retaining the Law, including a number of people who themselves had no, or hardly any, knowledge of the Law, can be partly explained by this attitude. Thus someone said:

- We can't stop. It has gone from generation to generation. It started before the White man came to this country and it can't stop. I reckon it's a good thing, the White people carry on their dance, they don't drop it.

And a woman who, apparently succesfully, had adopted the life style of the White people said:

- Yes the Law should be kept going. It's been there thousands of years. I don't want it to be lost. It makes the people distinct. They should be proud of it.

CHAPTER 4.

THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY AND ITS SOCIAL ORGANIZATION.

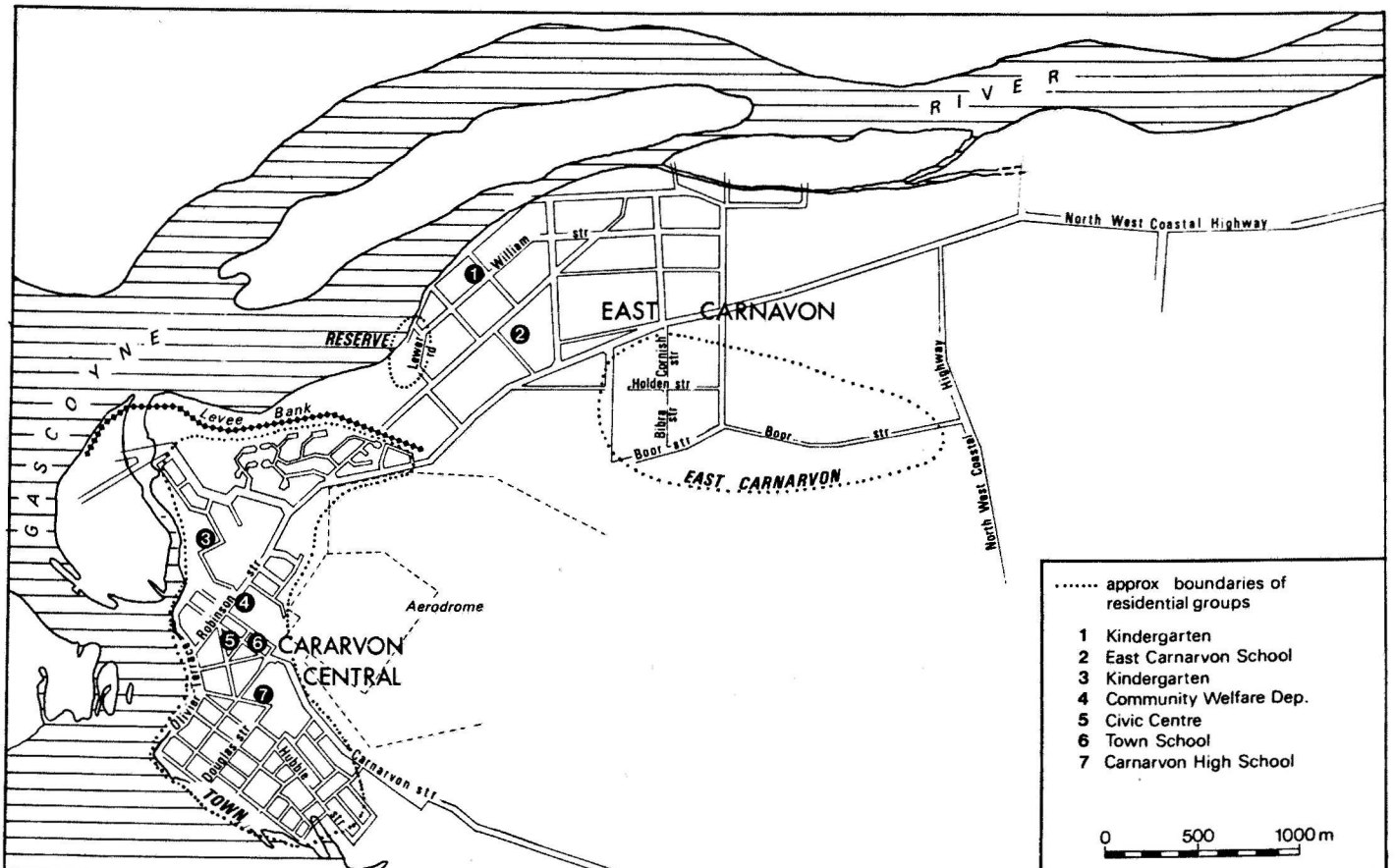
Internal differentation of the Aboriginal community.

As appeared from historical evidence, legislation and social practice in the north-west of Western Australia created a high barrier between Whites and the great majority of people of Aboriginal descent. Until the sixties, when the restrictive legislation upon Aborigines was largely abolished, only a small number of Aborigines had gained citizenship rights. What is more, even those who had become more or less completely assimilated had no, or very few, close interpersonal relations with Whites other than pure status relations.

It will be shown later that in general this still holds good today and that in this respect it is legitimate to set the people of Aboriginal descent apart from the Whites as a separate social category. Doing so,two things, however, should be emphasized.

Firstly, that it would be impossible to treat and understand the socioeconomic situation of people of Aboriginal descent in Carnarvon without making reference to White society at large, and that of Carnarvon in particular. Taking the concept of "community", as Gans (1962:104) does, as "referring to an aggregate of people who occupy a common and bounded territory within which they establish and participate in common institutions", use of the term community in relation to the Aboriginal people only, in fact, is rather doubtful. Aborigines in Carnarvon today are tied up in the institutions of the White society and sociologically can only be meaningfully characterized by making reference to the part they take in these institutions. If, however, we use the term community with the connotation of a body of persons having a common history and common social, economic and political interests, then one is more justified in speaking of the Carnarvon Aboriginal community, thereby including the great majority of people of Aboriginal descent.

The problem involved here is the old sociological question of delineating social groups: many different groups and group structures can be distinguished on the basis of a criteria of classification. The same question essentially plays a major role in thinking about ethnicity. Ethnic groups too can be qualified on the basis of a variety



Map 4. Carnarvon.

of criteria. As van den Berghe (1975:72) notes these criteria are largely twofold, for: "Ethnic groups are defined both by the objective cultural modalities of their behaviour ... and by their subjective views of themselves and each other....". Although the second aspect of ethnicity has been noted by others before him, it was Barth (1969) who explicitly stressed ethnicity as a subjective phenomenon and saw ethnic groups primarily as categories of ascription and identification by the actors involved.

In analyzing the social relations between Whites and people of Aboriginal descent in Carnarvon this subjective conception of ethnicity must be taken into account, next to "objective" criteria. As indicated above, Aborigines in Carnarvon are very much involved in the institutions of White society and some in their way of life are indistinguishable from the Whites. Thus, objective, external criteria alone seem unable to explain the existing social separateness of Whites and Aborigines. Subjective identification and status ascription certainly also play their part, as will be shown again in other sections of this text. Especially in the past, when they were supported by a highly discriminatory legislation against Aborigines, Whites generally categorized everyone of Aboriginal descent in the lowest ranks of the White-dominated status hierarchy. Therefore in spite of their close involvement in the White socioeconomic system it still makes sense to speak of a separate Aboriginal community.

Distinguishing these two ethnic groups in Carnarvon, a second, equally important, point must be raised. It concerns the internal differentiation of the Aboriginal community, the examination of which will take up the remainder of the first section of the present chapter.

Although, particularly in respect to their place in the status and power hierarchy, the juxtaposition (or opposition?) of Whites and Aborigines is justifiable, the notion of an undifferentiated Aboriginal community is a false one. Despite many overlaps and similarities there is no such thing as a uniform Aboriginal experience. As was already shown in chapter two, for instance, many people of part- Aboriginal descent have a different background than many full-blood Aborigines and also in the different regions of Western Australia social environmental conditions for the Aborigines have varied considerably. The results of this variety of socialization experiences will be dealt with below.

Earlier, in the introduction of this book, a brief description was given of three major residential groups which

can be distinguished within the Aboriginal community: the Reserve, Yankeetown or East Carnarvon, and the people living in conventional houses in town. Of the total Aboriginal population of approximately 1200 people living in the shire of Carnarvon roughly 75 percent belong to these three groups.

Locality, at the time of research was clearly correlated with social, economic and cultural characteristics of the Aboriginal groups involved. If something like a cultural continuum could be drawn up the people of the Reserve, who are still closest to an authentic Aboriginal tradition would constitute its "Aboriginal" end, whereas the town dwellers could be found near the opposite "White" pole. Many of the latter have completely or almost completely lost their "Aboriginality" in a cultural sense and have gone furthest in the adoption of the White Australian life style, customs and values. The East Carnarvon residents in this respect form an intermediate category.

The relatively neat division of the Aboriginal community into these three residential groups is partly a consequence of external forces and reflects the control exercised by Whites over the lives of Aboriginal people. This is not to say that Aboriginal people showed no initiative in shaping their own lives, nor that local origin, parentage, and personal and cultural affinity were negligible factors in the establishment of the residential groups. The limits, however, within which these factors could be operative for a long time have been (and still are), directly or indirectly, set by the legal, economic, and informal social structure of the White society. Thus, for instance, Aboriginal people who, temporarily or permanently, moved from the pastoral properties to the town were forced to congregate on the Reserve. On the other hand, many of those who came to Carnarvon from the towns in the districts south of that of the Gascoyne were allowed to camp on the outskirts of the town and many of them chose the sandflats of East Carnarvon for this purpose. A number of these people had exemption certificates or citizenship rights and therefore legally could not be removed to the Reserve. Others who did not have these papers, but were accustomed to town life in the districts where they had come from and showing signs of assimilation, were sometimes also left undisturbed.

In the composition of the group living in conventional houses in town the degree of assimilation has even played a more decisive role. As, almost without exception, Aborigines economically belong in the lower income group they

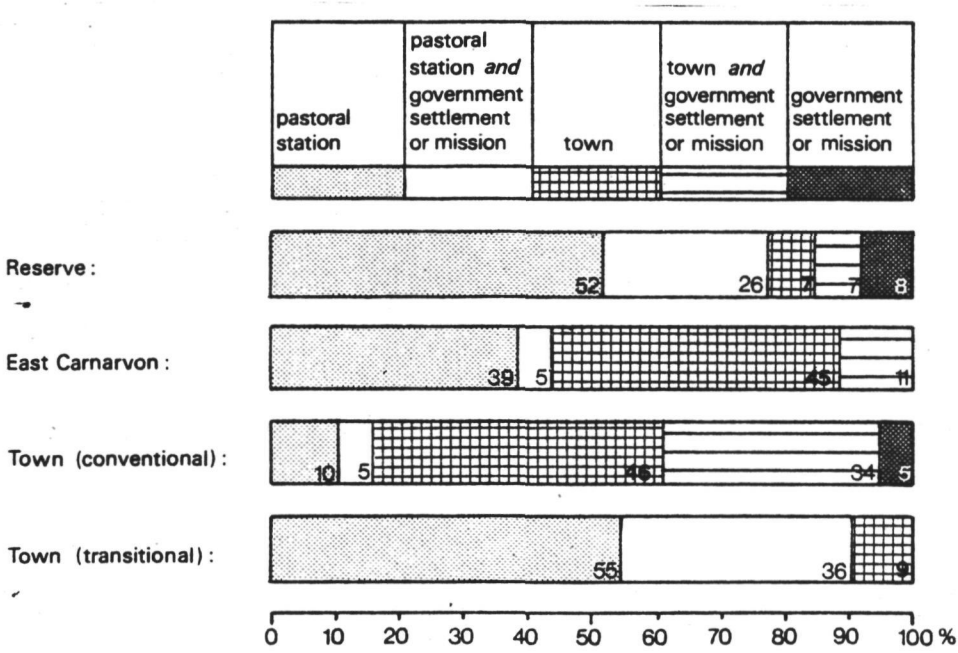
depend on governmental housing schemes. The officers of the State Housing Commission, responsible for the allocation of state houses, evidently favoured those Aboriginal people whom they expected to be least "offensive" to their potential White neighbours, that is, Aborigines whom they judged to be most "Europeanized".

External factors were also influential in the origin of other smaller residential groups which are not treated in detail here. The largest of these groups is probably that of the people who live in the so-called "transitional" houses dispersed through the town but all rather remote from the concentration of White population. The transitional houses which are of inferior quality, were built to give Aboriginal families a chance to get used to a normal, average Australian house. The people who were selected to live in these houses closely resemble the Reserve group in social background, as will be shown below. Approximately 70 people live in these transitional houses. Other residences of Aboriginal people are found at the "Church of Christ Mission", a few miles outside the town; on the sheep stations in the rural district surrounding the town; and in camps scattered on the outskirts of the town. In the Church of Christ Mission two groups reside: school-age children and old-age pensioners. The children, a significant number of whom are from the Ashburton district, live in cottages under the supervision of White "fosterparents" and attend the State schools in Carnarvon. Children are brought to the mission because their parents work out in the bush where school attendance of the children is impossible, others are sent to the mission by the Community Welfare department because in the Department's judgment their parents are unable to look after them. The old-age pensioners at the mission almost invariably have spent the greatest part of their life on sheep stations in the bush and are not accustomed to life in a town. Many of them find the Reserve or East Carnarvon too rowdy and prefer the quiet isolation of the mission. The number of people who live permanently on the sheep stations is small and probably does not exceed 50 or 60. However, many Aborigines, from the Reserve and East Carnarvon exclusively, spend part of the year on the sheep stations. This will be treated in more detail in a following chapter. People living away from the Reserve or East Carnarvon in scattered camps do so for a variety of reasons; some work on the plantations along the river and erect camps near their place of employment, others just

prefer the solitude.

In order to characterize the major residential groups, figure 2 relates these groups to the social environment in which their members have grown up during the first sixteen years of their life.

Figure 2.
Social backgrounds of members of residential groups. Percentages of people per residential group related to the social environment in which they lived during the first 16 years of their life.

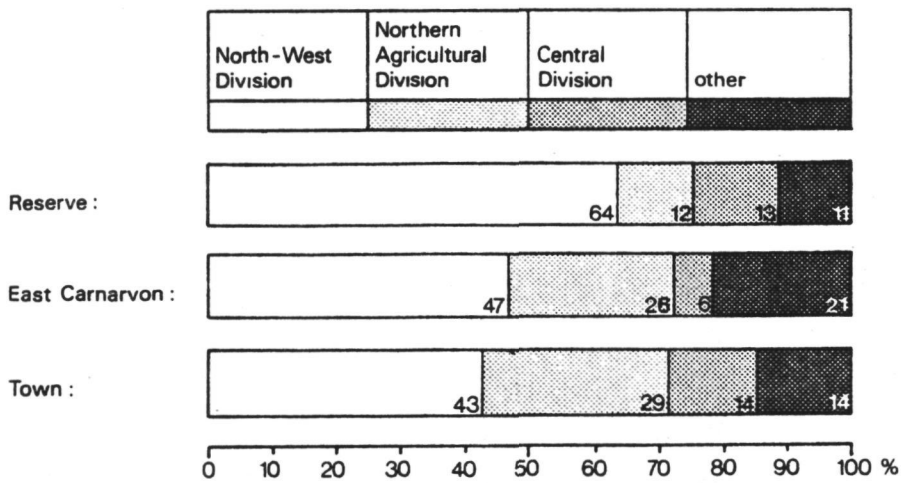


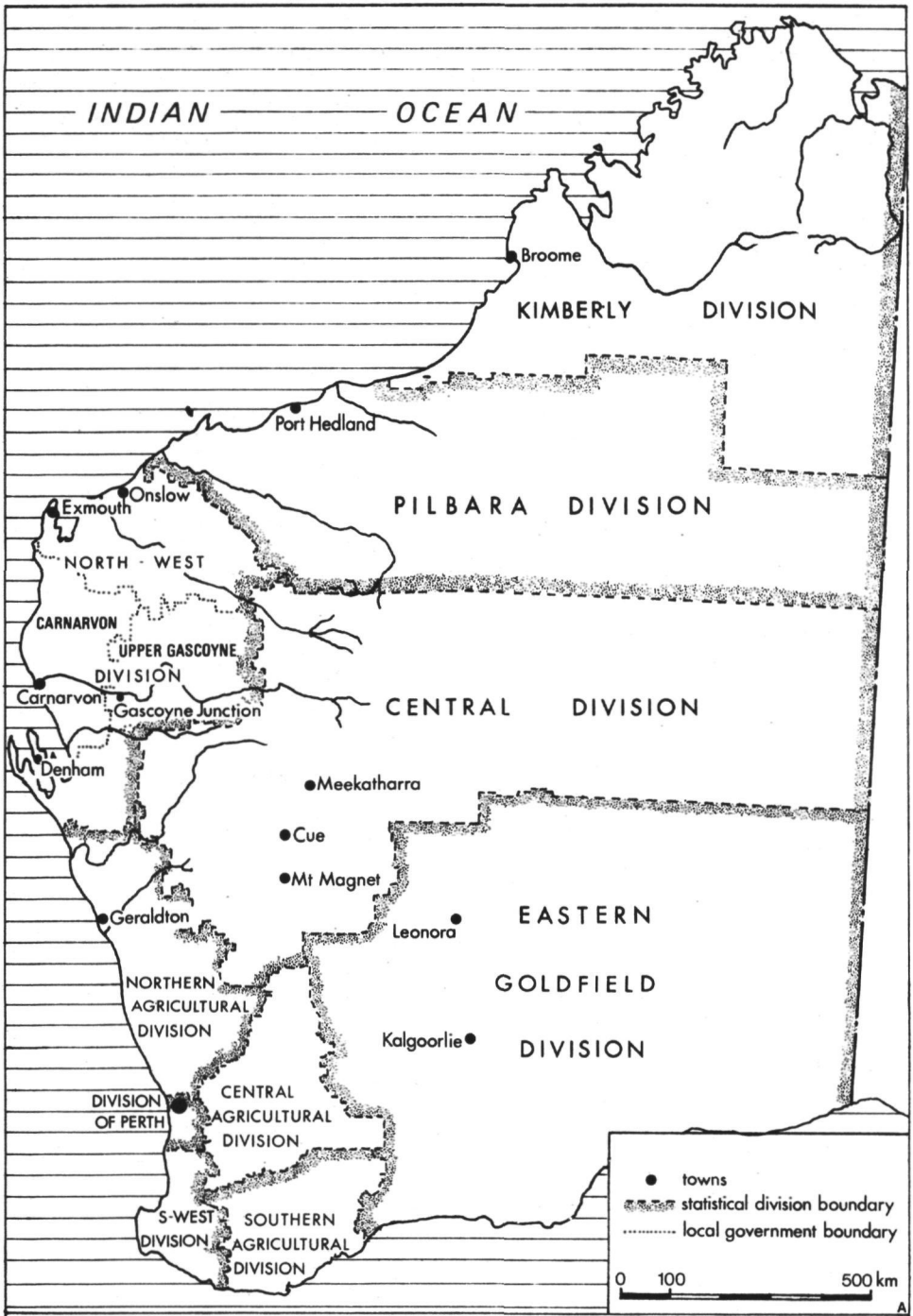
As the figure shows a large majority of people from the Reserve were born on a pastoral station (78 percent) a significant number of whom have later in their life been removed to a government settlement or a mission (26 percent). Only a small proportion of the Reserve people were born in a town (14 percent), half of whom have later also been removed to a mission or government settlement (7 percent). On the Reserve we find the highest proportion of people who were born and raised on a government settlement or mission. In contrast with this the people who live in conventional houses in town in majority were born in a

town environment (80 percent), less than half of whom have later been sent to a mission or government settlement (34 percent). Only 15 percent of the town people of this category were born on a pastoral property. The East Carnarvon group is truly an intermediate group, according to this particular characteristic, and the people who live in the transitional houses in town show great similarity to the Reserve group. Interpreting this figure it may be important to note that a great majority of people from the town (conventional) group who are classified as having spent part of their life in a government settlement or mission have, in fact, lived in missions or other private institutions (although subsidized by the government) and not in the government settlements. The quality of education, and living in general, to which they have been exposed there was by far superior to that experienced by children who were sent to the government settlements at Mogumber and Carrolup (see chapter 2).

Figure 3 shows the region of birth of the members of the three major groups. The regional divisions used in this figure correspond with the official statistical divisions of the State of Western Australia each of which comprises a number of local government areas.

Figure 3.
Regional background of members of residential groups. Percentages of people per residential group related to the local region where they were born.





Map 5. Western Australia: Statistical areas. (1969)

As the figure shows Carnarvon serves as a population centre for Aboriginal people from an extensive area of Western Australia. More than half the members of both the East Carnarvon group and that of the town are from areas outside the North West division which comprises the local government area of Carnarvon and the immediately neighbouring Upper Gascoyne, Shark Bay and Ashburton districts. A fairly large proportion of people of these two groups have come to Carnarvon from the Northern Agricultural division which, among others, comprises the local government areas of Northhampton, Mullewa and Geraldton. These last-named three regions account for the largest proportion of people who have moved to Carnarvon from this particular division. In this part of the state towns had more influence on the lives of Aboriginal people than in the North West division where, besides Carnarvon, the little town of Onslow for a long time was the only other town in a considerably large area. A remarkable feature, not explicitly borne out by the table is that practically all the members of the town group have rather shallow roots in the area surrounding Carnarvon town. Although 43 percent of the town people were born in the North West division, the parents of nearly all of them have come from districts further away, the closest of which is the Shark Bay area south of Carnarvon Shire. In contrast with this the Reserve people have deep-seated connections with the area surrounding the town. They are the group with the largest proportion of "local" people. Nearly two thirds of them are from the North West division. 88 Percent of the last-mentioned were born in the shires of Carnarvon and Upper-Gascoyne and so were their parents. The East Carnarvon group, in this respect too, holds an intermediate position. It also appears from this table that in the East Carnarvon group we find the largest proportion of people from districts other than the ones explicitly mentioned in the table. More than the other two areas East Carnarvon serves as a place of residence for people from many different regions of Western Australia. This residential area seems to be the most "cosmopolitan" of the three and apart from the more permanent inhabitants offers refuge to many "drifters" including Whites. Compared to the Reserve East Carnarvon is not so strictly isolated from the White people and in this respect could be regarded as a further stage in Aboriginal assimilation. In one of the scarce descriptions of social life in Carnarvon Rowley (1972:75) wrote of East Carnarvon

in the sixties: "What could have been a new kind of social order was taking shape on the flats of East Carnarvon. Here there were obviously no building controls. All kinds of shacks were inhabited by all kind of people-Aboriginal, Asian and European Australian. It was like one of the settlements seen beside an Indian reservation, with here a big truck or handsome car standing in front of the poor shack where the owner lives, there a reasonable owner-built house; here the home of a white taxi driver whose wife is Aboriginal, with the taxi out in front; there a Chinese style dwelling, but built of iron or an old bus in which some Aborigines are living".

Yet, as Rowley himself already suspected, the new kind of social order has not come about, at least not in East Carnarvon. The social distance between Whites and Aborigines in East Carnarvon which Rowley's rather superficial observation does not make sufficiently explicit, has not been diminished, despite the fact that some White people still live in the area and some single White men even live in the camps of Aborigines. The last-mentioned, as a matter of fact, seem to be drop-outs from White society, most of whom are addicted to heavy drinking.

The difference between the three residential groups under consideration is further illustrated by the relative numbers of full-blood Aboriginal people in each of the groups. Expectedly, the Reserve sample has the largest proportion of full blood-people (72 percent); in the East Carnarvon sample 13 percent are full-blood Aboriginal and of the town sample only 4 percent belong to this category. The meaning of this ill-named category of course does not reside in its physical connotation, but in the social significance people attach to this characteristic. Not only White people, but also Aborigines use it in their classification of people of Aboriginal descent. Moreover, the big difference in the proportion of full-blood members between the Reserve on the one hand and the East Carnarvon and town group on the other, is symptomatic of other underlying differences between the groups. Knowledge and influence of traditional Aboriginal culture, for instance, are found mostly on the Reserve; in the East Carnarvon group one still finds a reasonable number of people who can speak an Aboriginal language but few who have extensive knowledge of Aboriginal Law; in the town group ability to speak an Aboriginal language as well as knowledge of the Law are rare phenomena.

Thus the Aboriginal population can be differentiated according to a number of criteria many of which are closely related. Some of the most important of these criteria, namely those which in particular determine Aboriginal status in White society: education, employment, income and housing, will be treated in more detail in following chapters. Here I will limit myself to pointing out the differences in social and geographic background of the Aboriginal people of Carnarvon. Although one should be careful of quick generalizations and causal explanations, the connection between certain local origins and socialization experiences on the one hand, and ability to assimilate into the wider Australian society on the other, presents itself. The absolute social isolation and strict social hierarchy prevailing among Aborigines and Whites on stations, appears to have clearly obstructed the former in coming to terms with White society. Dissolution of this isolation, be it ever so minute, as occurred in the town environment, has made possible (not necessitated) the first steps towards a new social order and to Aboriginal assimilation.

Structure, boundaries and interrelations of the residential groups.

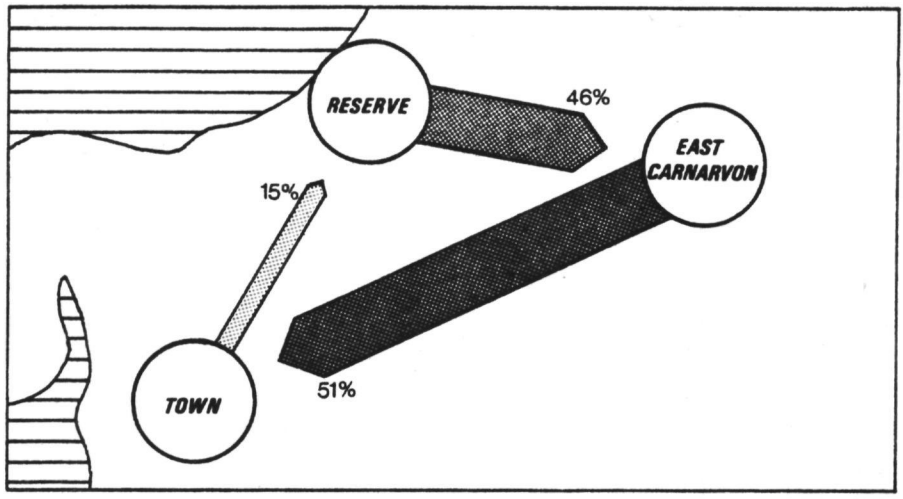
Although to some extent external influences have played a role in the composition of the local groups in Carnarvon, these groups are certainly not just arbitrary aggregates of people without any internal cohesion. Firstly, it should be born in mind that external forces like local government authorities, officers of the former departments concerned with Aboriginal affairs and the State Housing Commission and the like did not always endeavour, and if so, did not always succeed in suppressing the principles which Aborigines themselves adhered to in social aggregation. Secondly, if authorities aimed at bringing certain people together in specific environments they often seized upon existing lines of division.

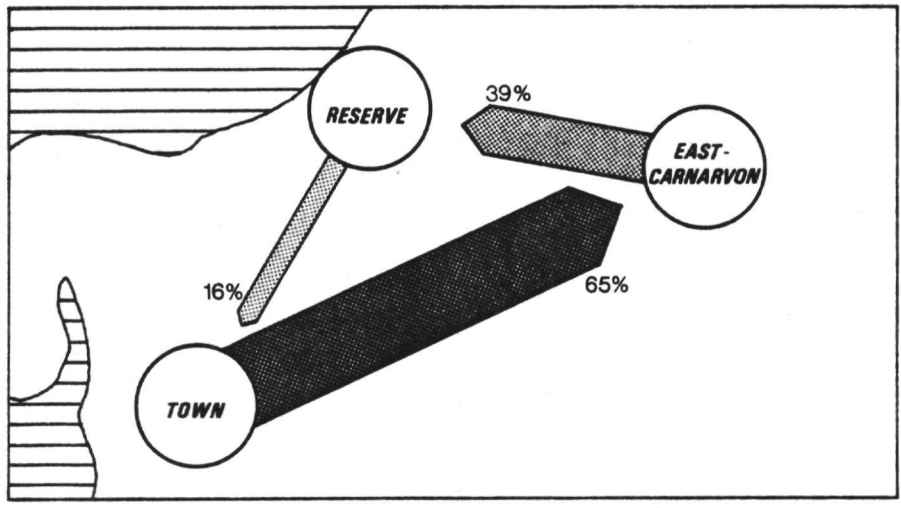
Social organization is primarily articulated by kinship, which in turn is closely connected with locality. Both principles still play a dominant role in the social organization of the Aboriginal community of Carnarvon and are largely responsible for the internal cohesion of the residential groups mentioned before and at the same time for the absence of any well defined boundary between the groups. Aboriginal people attach great significance to kinship relations

and primarily identify other Aborigines by giving them a place in their web of kinship relations. A man of remote Aboriginal descent, yet readily identifying as an Aborigine, reflected on this tendency when he said: "they claim everybody.... they'd claim their cousins and their brothers and they claimed even relations that weren't there". In line with this, the Aboriginal community of Carnarvon shows a very dense and complex kinship network.

Yet, the boundaries between the residential groups are not entirely blurred and the principle of local origin plays an important part in this. Thus, the Reserve people who, as shown earlier, in majority belong to the Gascoyne area are clearly distinguishable from the town group in particular. Of all the town people who were interviewed 15 percent mentioned kinship ties with the people from the Reserve, whereas 39 percent of the East Carnarvon people claimed to have kinsmen in the reserve group. Relationships between the town and East Carnarvon were more frequent: 65 percent of the town people claimed to have relatives in East Carnarvon and, inversely, of the latter group 51 percent claimed to have relatives in the town. To complete the picture, 46 percent of the Reserve dwellers said they had kinsmen in East Carnarvon and 16 percent of them had relatives in town. Judging by these figures one could say that the Reserve comparatively speaking is the most isolated group with relatively few links with the town group in particular. The figure shown below graphically illustrates these relations between the groups.

Figure 4. (see next page)
Density of kinship ties between the three largest residential groups in Carnarvon.





Expectedly, genealogical connectedness within each of the three groups occurs even more frequently. Not quite 90 percent of the respondents of the town sample had relatives within their own group and in the East Carnarvon and Reserve sample the percentage was even higher, nearly reaching its maximum. As these figures suggest, migration into the Gascoyne area apparently closely followed kinship lines. Indeed, those who had come to Carnarvon from regions outside the Carnarvon and upper-Gascoyne Shire, gave kinship as one of the main reasons for their moving to

the town. Such a "chain migration" has also been described by Gale (1972:74) for South Australian Aborigines moving into Adelaide.

Interpersonal relations between Aborigines are largely coterminous with kinship relations. When people were asked to name three families with whom they had most contacts, these families almost invariably turned out to be related to the respondent. There were no marked differences in this respect between the members of the various groups. Actual contacts between the groups, then,to some extent correspond with the number of kinship ties between the groups.

According to a number of interrelated characteristics such as local background, descent, occupation, culture and general outlook on the world, etc., the Aboriginal population of Carnarvon shows an interaction pattern which forms the basis of the differentiation of the Aboriginal community, and which in turn affects the continued existence of such "objective" characteristics. To what extent, however, is such a differentiation recognized by Aborigines themselves in their definition of the social situation? In order to learn about the subjective perception Aborigines have of social relations within their community I asked them whether they felt that different groups of Aboriginal people could be distinguished in Carnarvon. The question was answered affirmatively by 49 percent of the respondents while the rest felt that there were no differences at all among the members of the Aboriginal community.

In the first category of answers some respondents adopted a kind of stratification criterion to draw dividing lines among people of Aboriginal descent. Closely related to such a hierarchical fission is the style of life that people lead. The extent to which people have become assimilated, that is, have adopted the ways and values of the White people, although not always explicitly stated, certainly seems to be of some importance. In this way especially the town and Reserve dwellers were contrasted as appears from a sample of the answers given:

- You got some half-caste people some of them are like White people, they're stuck up; they think they're White.
- Some live a better life than others. Others just stay where they are, don't want to improve themselves. Some of them just drink their life away.
- There's a certain amount of diehards and they're not prepared to take the new way of life. This is basically

brought about by education.... when they work on the young blokes now, the new generation will be able to assimilate into the community as a whole.

- Some of the people in town are different from us; they don't want to join us at the bar.
- Some have lifted their standard of living, they form a separate group; they look after one another.
- You got Coloured peoples around here that look down on the ones stopping at the Reserve; they think they're as good as the White. A lot I know look down on the people of the Reserve as being backward. But I think they're the same. The people in town get just as drunk, have just as many fights.
- The Reserve is like a big family group only talk to other people when they feel like it.
- Well, like my cousins, their father is White .... they think they're White; they don't talk to anyone that's full blood, don't talk to anybody from the Reserve, they say: "what's you talking to that Blackfella for? Well... they're Coloured too, they don't think about that. These town Coloured people think they're better than those of the Reserve ..... but the old people down the Reserve have been very good to me ever since I was a little girl and I'll never walk past them.
- There's different groups allright. We don't talk with anyone from the Reserve. They come up to you and say they are related to you. Most of the time they're drunk, I don't like that. They slobber all over you and say they know your father, ask you for money for a drink; you refuse they want to fight you.
- Aborigines in Yankeetown are full bloods, not in colour, but the way they behave. They have worked in the bush all their life and only came to town occasionally to have a "booze-up". It 's only since the last few years that these people have some jobs in town. Most of them are half-caste people but they live like the full bloods.

Others who acknowledged distinctions among Aboriginal people, did so on grounds of knowledge of the Aboriginal Law or on a combination of knowledge of the Law and adaptation to White society.

- We (from the Reserve D.) are different from the Yankeetown people, they didn't go through the Law.
- The Shark Bay people are different, they got no tribal Law there; most of them are hard workers who live like

the White people.

That respondents who referred to a degree of assimilation in their classification of members of the Aboriginal community generally belonged to the town group, should not come as a surprise. A majority of Reserve people and about half of those of the East Carnarvon sample, on the other hand, said that no boundaries existed between Aborigines. They expressed that:

- In Carnarvon we all mix together.
- All the Jamadji people are together. People from the Reserve go to East Carnarvon to drink there, sleep there. People from the town visit us and we visit them.
- We all stick together here, we have a little bit of a fight every now and then, you can't do that with the White man, he won't forget you if you had a fight with him. They all mix up here. They even come from town to have a game of card with their relations; they never forget their relations no matter whether they have a flash house and a car.
- By the tribal way they have different groups, but now the White man's law has come we all pull together. People from town and East Carnarvon mix up with Reserve people.

From the answers to this question one could get the impression that socioeconomic differences which are of such overriding importance in White society as occupation, housing income do not (yet) count so much for many inhabitants of the Reserve and for a certain category of people of East Carnarvon, likewise. Of course, the existence of such an outlook cannot be derived from the answers to one question only. Yet, it was remarkable that respondents from the town group more frequent reference to what may be regarded as White ideals and behavioural standards. The rural background of Reserve and East Carnarvon people could certainly account for their lack of sophistication (in White terms!) and a view of the world that is still largely confined to people of their own ethnic group. An indication for this I found when in my interviews I asked respondents if they thought that in Carnarvon one could distinguish different groups of people. More than half of them (59 percent) answered this question with exclusive reference to the Aboriginal group, 3 percent did not know and 38 percent answered within the general frame of reference of the wider Carnarvon community that the question intended to cover.

The last-mentioned category comprised a disproportionate number of town people, whose view apparently exceeds the limits of the Aboriginal group more than does that of the others.

Despite objective differences among the people of Aboriginal descent and the subjective perception of these differences by a number of members of the Aboriginal community itself, one can certainly not say that the community is torn apart by fundamental oppositions. Kinship, certain common historical experiences and, in particular, a commonly experienced non-White identity give unity to the group. This is not to imply that so complicated a phenomenon as social identity is a static thing. Identification patterns vary not only in historical time but also, sometimes within a very short period of time, according to the situation in which people find themselves. However this may be, social structural conditions in Carnarvon apparently have not created a serious split in the Aboriginal community. When, in the course of fieldwork, I approached people of remote Aboriginal descent to ask for their cooperation with my research into "the social situation and social problems of Aborigines in Carnarvon", none of them in fact objected to being singled out for that purpose. When asked about this specifically, very few people said to be offended by being called an Aborigine, even though some felt that it would be more appropriate to label them as Coloured persons.

The only wide rift in the Aboriginal community seems to exist between what the Aborigines themselves call the "Norwesters" and the "Souwesters". The exact geographic demarcation line between the two groups is difficult to determine. The Norwesters, in any case, include the people who were born and have grown up in that part of Western Australia which lies north of Geraldton. This is the large majority of the people of Carnarvon (90 percent at least). The Souwesters are the strangers with whom this majority of Carnarvon Aborigines feel no relationship of "kind". The Norwesters, on the other hand, are the "we-group", the good people whom one can trust, in contrast with the Souwesters who are considered to be unreliable, unpredictable and troublesome. Separateness and antagonism in relation to the latter was frequently and spontaneously voiced:

- Sometimes these half-caste blokes from the south come to this town, play up and then we get the blame.

- Norwesters are more timid than the Souwesters who are more cheeky and don't put up with everything so easy as Norwesters do.
- You got a lot of strange people up here: Souwesters. They got different ideas to us.
- Souwesters are worse than Norwesters. They come into the pub looking for fights. N. is one of the worst towns of the lot; they even got gangs of Coloured people fighting each other.
- There are ill-feelings between Norwesters and Souwesters. The boys here used to go to the stations for a whole year; now that the Souwesters have come here they won't go working and just drink. There are many Souwesters in East Carnarvon and on the Reserve; they're squatters, move in with relatives and make it difficult for them.

Souwesters are aware of the antagonism towards them. A man who complained to me about the lack of assistance he got from a certain Aboriginal leader explained: "I'm a Souwester you see, my hometown is Albany. These Norwesters don't listen to a Souwester".

Apart from this opposition,Aboriginal informants, despite a lot of social disorganization within their community, in majority do not have the feeling that there is no solidarity among their ranks. The Aboriginal community in the eyes of these people is not an "atomistic society" in which each man merely seeks his own advantage with disregard for others. When asked, for instance, if they felt that Aborigines in general support each other and give help to those who need it, 60 percent answered affirmatively, 12 percent were indeterminate, and 28 percent complained of a lack of cooperation. Examples of affirmative answers are:

- We are commoners, we help on another.
- Coloured people always help one another.
- It's up to us who could pass for White people to acknowledge Aboriginal descent and help others who are not so well off.
- Yes, whatever they got to spare, what others haven't got: tucker and that, we help them; when our turn comes they help us with a bit of flour, baking powder, sugar, tea. That's one thing they does here, help one another.

In these cooperative relations kinship, of course, plays an important role. A number of people, and this mainly concerned those who had adopted the values and standards of the Whites, in fact saw these patterns of reciprocal assistance

as an impediment to Aboriginal advancement. One respondent, for example, said:

- Aboriginal people drain each other, look after each other too much. That's good in some ways but it makes it so difficult for them when they're trying to improve themselves.

People who answered the question negatively sometimes explicitly made a reservation for kinship relations as a sphere in which cooperation did occur:

- They're a selfish mob, just among their family they help.

Some other negative answers were:

- Aboriginal people don't pull together, there is too much selfishness.
- They go against each other.
- They don't pull together, rather leave it up to just a few.
- Most of the Aborigines think "I'm allright, if you don't want to help yourself bad luck for you". Like X. he only wants meeting (of the local Aboriginal Advancement Association, D.) for the half-caste people, not for the full bloods from the Reserve.

Kinship relations which played such a vital role in traditional Aboriginal culture remained influential during the period that Aboriginal traditions crumbled under the impact of the culture of the Whites. Aborigines, who for a long time were not entitled to social benefits and the majority of whom had to live on or under the bare subsistence level, by necessity relied on their family network to support them in times of hardship. Such patterns of mutual support are still important today and are partly the cause of the sparing use Aborigines make of the governmental social services like unemployment benefit.

Except through kinship relations, however, the Aboriginal community did not extensively engage in concerted efforts to tackle the social problems facing it. The most thriving Aboriginal associations at the time of the present research were some sporting clubs and these mainly had a membership of town and East Carnarvon people. The two associations which had specially been founded to promote Aboriginal welfare led a rather ailing existence. Of these two the Reserve based "Guda Club" (Guda = brother) was the most active. The club had largely arisen at the instigation of a White missionary of the Church of Christ Mission and a White woman who were both sympathetic towards the Aborigines. Its main object was the self-help of the Reserve people and, among

other things, the Club tried to set up economic activities like a trucking business for carting firewood, fencing posts, rubbish etc. in the Gascoyne district. Although the meetings of the Club Committee were open to everyone and people were encouraged to take part in the discussions and activities of the Club, membership was limited to a hard core of some ten to twelve persons. Especially the younger generation (under 30-35) showed very little interest. It should be noted, though, that the Guda Club truly had to struggle for its life. Without any economic resources, apart from a very old, dilapidated truck, the Club could hardly show any spectacular achievements which would make its purpose more clearly understood and would give it a greater appeal to potential young members. The absence of any financial support from the State or Federal Government for the Club was mainly to blame for its difficulties, which, of course, was unforgivable from the point of view of a policy aiming at improving the socioeconomic situation of Aboriginal people.

Next to the Guda Club there was also the "Carnarvon Aboriginal Advancement Association". More than the Guda Club this Organization aspired to represent the whole Aboriginal community of Carnarvon. The continuity of the Association seemed to depend on the efforts of some active White members who, till then in vain, had tried to effectuate complete Aboriginal control of the organization. Meetings of the Advancement Association were attended by a handful of Aborigines only: a few members of the Guda Club Committee and some people from the town. The objective of the Association, as its name indicates, was to act as a forum in which Aboriginal wishes and plans for specific projects assisting Aborigines in improving their position within the wider community could be voiced and discussed. The Association, by acting as a pressure group and intermediary, would try to get governmental support for the realization of the plans. Meetings of the Association were occasionally attended by officers of the then Department of Native Welfare and later, after the annulment of this department, by officers of the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority. Projects with high priority, according to the Association were: a housing scheme, credit facilities for Aborigines who wanted to start their own business, facilities for the reception of teenagers and unmarried mothers, a home for working young adults, a special village in the hills outside the town for Aborigines who rejected assimilation. None of these projects had materialized yet, mainly because of a complete lack of ef-

fective Governmental financial and organizational support.

Since I completed my fieldwork the Guda Club and the Carnarvon Aboriginal Advancement Association have amalgamated and formed the "Guda Club Incorporated". Stimulated by financial support of the Federal Labour Government under the then Prime Minister Mr. Whitlam, the Guda Club Inc. seems to have become a factor of influence in the Aboriginal community. The Club now owns a good truck, a little bus, and a garage workshop. It undertakes activities like wood-carting and other carrying on a commercial basis; a school- and old-age pensioners bus service; its garage-workshop is run by a manager-trainer and two trainee mechanics. The garage-workshop building is used for all sorts of occasions like adult training classes, meetings and social events. However, the Club, which for a significant part gained momentum by the enthusiastic cooperation of a group of elderly men and women from the Reserve, some town people and a few White friends, now seems to be becoming increasingly dominated by the people from town. As a member of the Club's committee said: "You see the Guda Club that we've got going well ... most of them are not Aborigines at all, but we like to help them. That's what we told X. (an old leading man from the Reserve group, D.) and the way he spoke was as if he didn't like that. But we try to tell them that we're trying to help them, to give them something to take the lead, to lead them and show them, and eventually they get under way...".

The Aboriginal household.

In order to describe the group around which a large part of the daily life of Aborigines revolves, the term household is used here. Since many Aborigines have no proper house and refer to their domicile as their "camp", the Aboriginal household can be described as the group of people who camp together or share a home. In somewhat more elaborate terms: the household is the residential unit and consits of the people who live together, pool their economic resources and, as a rule, eat together. Fixing a term to such a group may suggest a greater constancy than, in fact, it possesses. One of the most characteristic features of an Aboriginal household may well be its flexibility, its great capacity to adapt to frequent fluctuations in composition . People from other districts of Western Australia would visit their relatives and friends in Carnarvon and often stay for prolonged periods. Many of them would be in

search of employment, others were just travelling for a break in routine or escaping problems. Also within the Carnarvon district itself individuals or whole families moved from one household to the other. All this made it rather difficult sometimes to establish the exact household size and composition and, when discussing these two aspects below, those people will be taken into account who were permanent household members during my fieldwork period.

The people interviewed for this study cover 105 households, four of which consist of a single person. The remaining households show a wide range of variation in composition. Two main types can be distinguished. The first is called here the "simple" household and consists of husband, wife and children (including adopted and fostered children), or only a mother and her children. Slightly less than half of the households (45 percent) are of this nature. The second type is the "compound" household and refers to any household that comprises a group of people larger than just a nuclear family or mother-and-children group. 55 Percent of households are thus composed.

It is within this second category, of course, that one finds the wide range of composition. Some, for example, consists of a nuclear family with grandchildren and/or relatives of one of the spouses, others include two or more nuclear families plus single relatives and friends. Compound households of such complexity are partly a result of the importance attached to kin relations in Aboriginal society, partly also a reflexion of the shortage of proper accommodation for Aborigines. Generally the Aboriginal household is large with an average of 6.6 persons (against an average White household size in Carnarvon of 4.2 ((Abstract of Statistics, 1972)). Claims heard in Australia that the overcrowding of dwellings resulting from large household sizes is due only to necessity seem like a partial thruth in the light of my own data. When interviewing people about their housing aspirations, as a matter of fact, quite a few of the Reserve dwellers stated that they would not like to move to a house in town as they feared that this would mean their household would have to be split up. The same can be said with regard to the larger number of foster children and adopted children cared for in Aboriginal households. One quarter of all the households in my sample have one or more fostered or adopted children with an average of two such children per

household. Taking the simple households separately, the figure is even higher. In nearly one third of all these households foster or adopted children are being cared for. Again, this is for a part certainly caused by necessity: unstable marriage relations in combination with alcoholism in particular. Yet, it would be a misjudgment of Aboriginal society to contribute this phenomenon to involuntary factors only. The great flexibility of Aboriginal households is certainly also a consequence of Aborigines'emphasis on persons rather than on objects, on the great importance they attach to interaction with their peers and family. (cf. Gans, 1962:89-102).

Relations between husbands and wives.

In dealing with this aspect of Aboriginal social organization as in the next section on relations between parents and children, a brief reference to the culture of poverty concept seems necessary. The nature of internal family organization plays a crucial role in the debate about the concept. Many writers have stressed the disorganization of family life in groups characterized by a culture of poverty. Glazer, (1971:39) for instance, sees "the weakness of the marital and parental ties as the key characteristic of the culture of poverty". While few critics of the concept deny this instability of family life they are apprehensive about the view that social disorganization of this nature gives the culture of poverty a self-perpetuating character. People who, like Oscar Lewis himself, belief in this self-perpetuation of poverty point out that in such a deranged social environment the child acquires values, habits and a general outlook on life which are at the roots of the continued existence of the life style of the poor. Although I shall not deal with this theoretical issue in great detail, I think that the description of the relations of parents to one another and to their children may be viewed within the context of this theory.

In the Aboriginal community legal marriage is a rather rare phenomenon. Not quite 10 percent of the more durable relations between men and women are legal marriages. Although Aborigines recognize the distinction that Whites make between a legal marriage and a man and woman "just living together" they attach no great significance to this differentiation within their own community. That is to say, members of the town group increasingly follow White Austra-

lian marriage customs and go through the required civil and church ceremonies. When henceforth speaking of Aboriginal marriage I use this term to refer to all the socially recognized, more or less durable, relations between adult men and women. Aborigines indicate such relations by saying "I'm living with...".

As has been documented of people in comparable socio-economic conditions marriage relations in Carnarvon are rather unstable. In fact, in considering family life it is convenient to take as its core the mother with her children. Of all the mother-children units taken into account in this study 27 percent were without a husband or father. Included in this figure are only those units that are the result of a broken-down nuclear family, thus excluding the young unmarried mothers who had never had a relationship of any social significance with the father(s) of their children. Many of these mothers, moreover, are under 18 years of age and therefore not included in the interviews.

Of all the adult women interviewed 64 percent were living with a husband who for nearly two thirds of them (40 percent of the total) was their first husband. The table below gives a more detailed view of the frequency with which men and women enter into durable relations with each other.

Table 11.
Marital status of woman

34	living with 1st husband	
16	" " 2nd "	
3	" " 3rd "	
1	" " 4th "	
5	separated from 1st husband	not living with husband now
8	" " 2nd "	
2	" " 3rd "	
8	never had a more durable relation with man	
4	widowed after death 1st husband	
3	" " " 2nd "	

Considering figures about the frequency with which women have entered into a marriage it should be noted that often women only mentioned husbands by whom they had one or more children. Also, and this occurred with older women particularly, they did not usually mention the White fathers of some of their children even though they had sometimes lived with such a man for quite a while. In both instances, of

course, something of the nature of relations between men and women and of women's perception of marriage is revealed. In general I have the impression that it was relatively difficult to get exact figures on the number and durability of marriages women had had. Figures given here are on the conservative side and certainly do not exaggerate the number of marriages contracted.

Comparable figures obtained from male respondents show that 71 percent of them were living with a woman and that for nearly two-thirds of the men in this category (42 percent of the total male sample) this was their first wife. The discrepancy between the proportion of men who stated to be living with their first wife (42 percent) and that of women who claimed to be living with their first husband (32 percent) is notable. Probably it reflects on the fact than men generally give less accurate information on the number of marriages they have had because, unlike women, they are not confronted with the offspring of their previous relations.

The relative strength or weakness of marital ties in the Aboriginal community gains more perspective if data of the three main residential groups are given separately. Figures 5 and 6 summarize these data.

Figure 5.
Marital status of women and men of the three main residential groups. Percentages of each of the groups given separately.

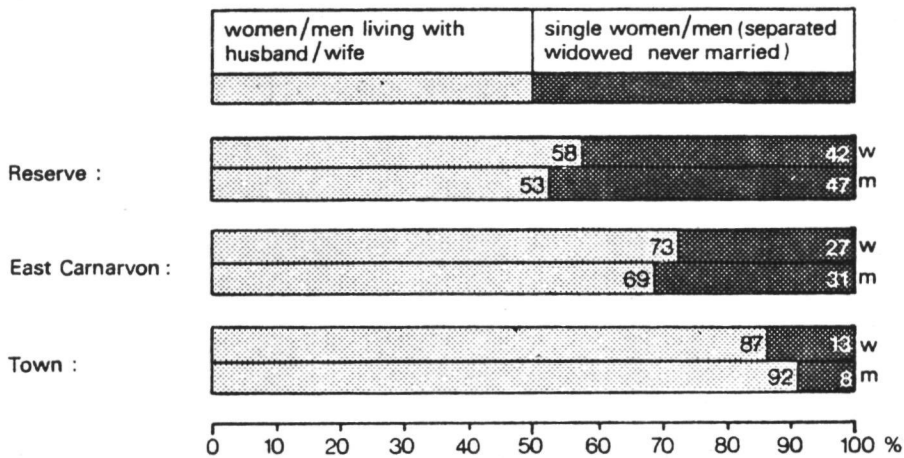
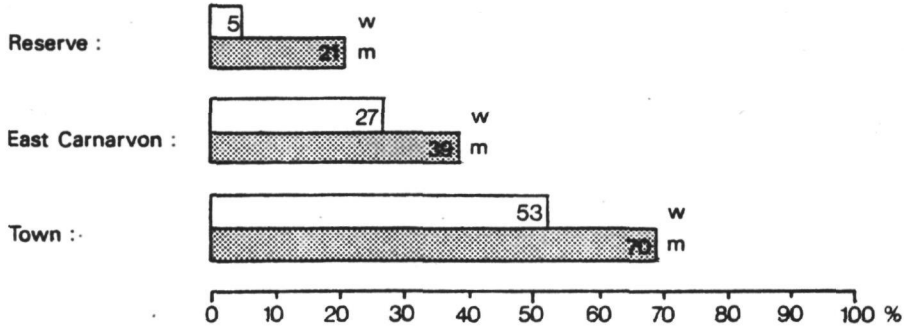


Figure 6.
Women and men claiming to be living with their first husband/wife. Percentages of each of the groups given separately.



In the Reserve group, apparently, marital stability is slightest. 42 Percent of the adult women here were living without a husband and, corresponding with this, roughly the same proportion of households on the Reserve were headed by a woman. Only 5 percent of the women of the Reserve were living with their first husband. These figures clearly contrast with those of the town sample where 87 percent of the women were living with a male partner. Slightly more than half of the women of this group were living with their first husband.

Evidence from the Aboriginal community of Carnarvon thus seems to support the view that socio-economic deprivation corresponds with a weakness of marital ties (1). The Reserve and East Carnarvon people, as we will see in greater detail in next chapters, score low in all the characteristics that determine a person's or group's socio-economic status in Australian society: education, occupation, income, housing. These same groups show the greatest incidence of material breakdown. Aborigines themselves recognize the high degree of instability of marriage relations within their group. In interviews and informal talks they spontaneously expressed awareness of this aspect of their life:

- Women go from hand to hand here.
- They think nothing of taking each other's wife.
- You don't see that often, a man and a woman staying together for such a long time; here they're leaving one another like a fly.

- They think nothing of taking their brother's wife here. Look at X she took the husband of her own cousin.

In general, however, there is a little moral indignation at a frequent change of marriage partner per se. Many Aborigines from an early age on have become accustomed to changes in marriage relations of their parents and other adults around them. Even the people in town in majority come from families where one or both of the parents have had more than one marriage partner. People take a rather pragmatical view of separation which is not surprising if one sees that the change of partner in itself is often far less disruptive to family life than the quarreling of partners which usually precedes such a change. Fighting between husbands and wives occurred more frequently in East Carnarvon and on the Reserve than in the town and often was of a very violent nature. Fights between husbands and wives constitute a truly negative aspect of the lives of many people; some women were so badly maltreated by their husbands that they ended up in hospital with broken arms, wounds from being stabbed with a broken bottle or knife, with split upper lips, broken jaws etc. Also, but less frequently, a man was injured by his wife. Brawls like these were part of a general tendency, towards physical violence in the Aboriginal community and were nearly always accompanied by heavy drinking. Alcoholism in fact was so indissolubly connected with the violent quarrels between husbands and wives that it could almost be considered as a necessary condition of their occurrence. Other reasons would be clouded by drunkenness, and small irritations between the partners would be blown up out of proportion when one or both of them were drunk. When asked about the causes of their violent arguments both men and women would frequently point at "just the drink". A woman told me:

- Many people are wasting their money just on one thing: the bottle. I used to drink myself but I find it's no good. There's a lot of trouble .... you get trouble with a man, get trouble with your kids .... see .... a man would go another way and a woman leave a mob of kids or something. Look at my brother now .... he had a family .... they split up, that's just from the grog .... that puts me right back when I saw that, you know. He had grown up children .... they got three girls in the mission now, he got one here. That's hard you know when people drink .... he put her in hospital twice. I been in hospital myself, that's when

(my husband) hits me. They're not thinking when they're drunk, they just do that .

Another woman said of her husband:

- When he's drunk he's very cruel to me, hits me with anything he gets hold of; he even beat me up with a broomstick. But when he's sober he's the nicest man ever .

Sometimes people would return home from the hospital where they had been treated for injuries received in a fight with their partner during the preceding night and be completely unable to remember why they had started quarreling. A usual answer would be: I was just silly you know.

If a reason, apart from just drunkenness, was given people frequently mentioned jealousy. An old man said:

- All these young blokes are jealous. They go to the pub with mates leaving their wives behind. When they're at the pub they continually ask themselves if their wives are faitful to them. These young people ain't worth a woman, they don't look after their woman .

A young woman who during the previous night had fought with her husband said:

- I didn't know what I was doing. I stabbed him with a bottle, I was jealous I suppose .

One day when I was watching a fight between a man and his wife outside one of the pubs of the town I asked the woman who was with me at that time what she thought to be the cause of so many brawls between husbands and wives; before she could answer her twelve year old daughter replied: "It's all jealousy". In fact, true or alleged unfaithfulness of marriage partners often involves the use of alcohol for the act itself or suspicion thereof is usually a consequence of the drinking bouts which are held with great frequency among certain groups of Aborigines.

Many men, particularly on the Reserve and in East Carnarvon, display a behaviour towards their women which certainly does not reflect the common Australian ideals of a good husband. Their style of life is characterized by a strong influence of a group of male "mates" whith whom they spend a lot of time and who can be considered, in many respects, as their prime group of reference. Their outlook on life, their view of social reality men largely get through the

group of their mates whose reactions to their behaviour are a prime factor of reinforcement of this pattern. Sexual prowess is part of the image of the ideal man within these groups where it is thought that a "real man" should drink hard, fight hard and make many conquests. In such a mental atmosphere the suspicion of unfaithfulness is easily aroused. A man should be on his guard against possible competitors and if his woman is taken from him he has only himself to blame. Thus it was said of a man whose wife had left him for another:

- He's like a baby. Never fought for his woman. They could take her off him just like that. Just like taking her from a bag .

The importance of the group of mates may be strengthened by the present employment pattern of Reserve and East Carnarvon men. Their work on the sheep station takes the men away from their families who stay behind in town. On the stations where they live for periods sometimes longer than one or two months the men work in a team of male colleagues with whom they share living quarters and whose companionship is a vital element in their daily life.

Effects of marriage breakdown on children.

The relatively loose marriage relations often, as shown above, accompanied by violent quarreling of husbands and wives can be a source of severe disorganization of family life. Nuclear family breakdown is mostly found on the Reserve and in East Carnarvon but occurs among the town dwellers also. When the family falls apart it is usually the woman with her children who stay together. In quite a few cases, however, women who have been left by their husbands are unable to keep their family together. An indication of this can be found in the relatively high numbers of foster and adopted children in the Aboriginal community. As mentioned before, of all the households covered in the sample of this study 25 percent have one or more foster or adopted children with an average of two such children per household. The majority of these children are from broken families and usually they are related to their foster parents. Some are children of a separated son or daughter, brother or sister of the foster parents, others are from more remote relatives or not related to their foster parents at all. Included in this figure, it should be noted, are only those children who have found a

more or less permanent foster family and not the ones who, because of problems at home, temporarily stay with Aboriginal or White foster parents or are being cared for in the mission.

Considering the relatively high number of foster and adopted children one should bear in mind that this figure is not just expressive of a negative aspect of Aboriginal family life but also indicates a flexibility of Aboriginal households, love of children, and a sense of responsibility for and affinity with a wide group of relatives and friends. In such a situation there are reasons to believe that absence of the father in itself does not adversely affect the children. In the Aboriginal community no social stigma is attached to the fatherless family and generally the households do not live in such isolation from one another as is the case in White Australian society. For an Aboriginal child substitutes for a father are always available in the form of an uncle, an older nephew, a grandfather or any other male in his immediate surroundings. Moreover, as a separation is often preceded by frequent and violent quarreling between husband and wife, it may even be said that for many children the parting of their parents is beneficial. A woman told me of her present husband:

- Long after the pub shuts he comes and plays up here. The kids can't sleep that way. He walks around the house all night banging the walls, doors and windows. Sometimes I just go away with the kids before he is due back. We sleep somewere in the bush then. But now it is too cold .

When two of the children of this woman ran away one day, they gave as a reason that they found home life unbearable because of the troubles with their father. Another young married woman who had set up her own household in town, told me that she was trying to get her younger brothers and sisters to come and live with her as she wanted to save them for the unhappy life at their parental home, where their mother was frequently beaten up by her husband. Other cases too occurred in which women had to flee from their aggressive husbands, leaving their children with him, or where it happened that children, sometimes very young ones, ran away to relatives while their parents were fighting. It seems plausible to say, then, that children suffer more from the friction and upheavals between their parents than from the absence of their father in itself.

Possibly the absence of a father affects the life of

children most severely by the often extreme poverty which his leaving brings upon his family. As will be shown later, in the Aboriginal community of Carnarvon men are the main breadwinners while very few women work, particularly on the Reserve and in East Carnarvon where desertion occurs most frequently. Even when an Aboriginal family is complete it is difficult to make ends meet. When in such conditions a woman is deserted by her husband her financial situation becomes precarious, even though she is entitled to receive a so-called deserted wife's allowance. It should be noted that a woman is only entitled to financial support by the Commonwealth and State Social Security Departments if she has children. A woman without children can't get any monetary assistance at all. Even though she is more fortunate than a childless woman a deserted mother of dependent children usually has to overcome certain obstacles before she can get monetary support. The delays caused by this bring hardship to many families. Some women with children, even, for reasons which will be explained in a next chapter, miss out on financial assistance altogether and in order to survive have to rely on help from relatives most of whom have very low incomes themselves.

Despite the flexibility of Aboriginal households and family life, giving children a relatively large social space to move in, a number of children suffer heavily from the social disorganization caused by marital instability and more broadly from the heavy use of alcohol in their community. Alcoholism, moreover, also directly affects the relations between mothers and children, Thus it happens that mothers leave their young children behind to go to the pub for a "booze-up" or to join a drinking party in someone's camp or in one of the regular spots in the shrub along the river near the Reserve or in East Carnarvon. Aboriginal people themselves complained of this neglect of their children by mothers and often expressed their concern:

- My sister doesn't worry about her baby, she leaves it alone just to go for a drinking party.
- They're bad mothers here, play cards all day and leave their children running about.
- My daughter just goes away to drink and doesn't worry about her little daughter.
- I'm looking after the two kids of .... she is constantly drunk lately and can't look after her children.

- These young mothers neglect their children, they got money for them but spend it on drink.
- Mothers don't look after their children, they leave them alone, don't feed them, get on the drink themselves.
- Take all the unmarried mothers here, they are an example of what goes on here. They get 64 dollars but they shout their boyfriends.

Thus many Aboriginal children grow up in a severely disturbed home background. Of the 50 children in Carnarvon who per July 1973 had become "state wards" for reasons of neglect or destitution, 46 were of Aboriginal descent. Such a figure may illustrate the huge difference in home support and comfort between Aboriginal and White children, it does not really indicate the magnitude of the social and economic disadvantage experienced by the former. Only those children become state wards whose deprivation is most obvious.

Aboriginal children, by necessity, acquire an early independence of their parents. Their life at home is not strictly controlled and they enjoy a great degree of freedom. It happened, for instance, that children of 5 or 6 years old in the middle of the night left the camp of their parents who were drunk and walked to relatives living a few miles away. Sometimes people had children with them whose mother and father they were unable to find and who later turned out to be in the local lock-up for some kind of offense usually connected with drunkenness. One day when I was visiting a family on the Reserve, the police came to their camp to arrest a young woman who was visiting there too. When she saw the police officers walking towards her the young woman in question handed over her one year old baby to a friend and got into the police van. Her three year old son, who was also with her, was just left standing there and later walked away with the woman who was holding his baby brother. Neither of the two children appeared upset by the sudden leave of their mother.

Peer groups and the relations between the generations.

In the Aboriginal community in general the peer group is very important as a reference group. The lack of parental control and the often unrewarding character of home life make the child spend a lot of time with his age mates who become a strongly influential factor in his life. This is not to underestimate the appeal which the peer group everywhere appears to hold for a child but merely to indicate

that the nature of home life can have a great impact on weakening or strengthening this appeal. It seems likely, moreover, that the existence of an ethnic boundary in the wider community increases the peer group's importance. By the time the Aboriginal child goes to school it is for the first time, really, that he is more than superficially confronted with the world of the White Australians. Particularly in such situations the child will find security and comfort among his Aboriginal peers who share his background, his perception of the world around him, and his habits. As will be shown in a later chapter, observation at the schools confirms that Aboriginal children socialize very little with White children and keep to the group of their Aboriginal peers.

By the time children have grown up into young adults and have families of their own the peer group remains a strong influence in their life. Young parents still spend a lot of time in the company of their friends with whom they go out while their parents, or others staying at home, look after their children. Young men in this respect have greater freedom of movement than women and, as said earlier, the male peer group remains a focal concern throughout the life of most men.

Although strong peer group attachments in a number of ways interfere with the integration of the nuclear family they do not rule out the importance of wider kinship ties in Aboriginal life. Apart from the fact that one's kin and peer group may show overlaps, the group of kinsmen remains a focus of personal affection and loyalty. The network of relatives, and more narrowly the compound household, moreover, plays a major role in the economic sphere. Income is distributed within the kin group and young families, but also single young men and women, are often financially dependent on the older generation. Old-age pensions drawn by the old people are an important and constant source of money and help to bridge periods during which the young people are unable to find work. This in itself does not worry the old people but the fact that the young men and women often spend their money on drink and, when intoxicated, become troublesome in the camp, is a source of irritation to them. The old ones regularly expressed their discontent with this state of affairs.

- The young people here are too lazy to work, they live on the money of the old-age pensioners.

- These young people spend all their money on booze and then live of the older ones. But we are to blame. We must be the boss again. We shouldn't give them the money.
- Nowadays the boys and girls are all over the place. Older people get sick of chasing them all the time; now it's the time to do something for us.
- The young ones are a burden to us, they should go to town and try to better themselves instead of pestering old people.
- The old people, themselves are to blame for the young blokes not working. The pensioners give them to eat and the women pay their de facto husbands from their endowment money.

Young men and women, on their part, are aware of the complaints of the old ones. The latter, after all, openly voice their criticism not only in informal talks or quarrels, but also at Guda Club meetings or "court sessions" held at the Reserve. When an old man asked his niece to accompany him to town, the girl replied: "No, then they'll all say again that us young people follow the old ones for their pension cheques". Such friction between the generations is mainly found on the Reserve and in East Carnarvon. Here, more so than among the town dwellers, the breakdown of traditional channels of social control and the waning influence of traditional values and norms is not followed by a new system of social ideals and goals. At the same time, in these two areas we find the highest rates of unemployment and accompaning poverty. Old people recognize the odds that young people are up against and consequently family ties are nearly always stronger than the feelings of irritation caused by the behaviour of the young.

A brief look at the Aboriginal household from the point of view of the concept of the "culture of poverty".

The culture of poverty, Oscar Lewis (1966b:XLVII) said, on the family level is associated with ".... the absence of childhood as a specially prolonged and protected stage in the life cycle, early initiation into sex, free unions or consensual marriages, a relatively high incidence of the abandonment of wives and children, a trend toward female- or mother- centered families ....".

This weakening of marital and parental ties has been

taken as one of the key characteristics of the life of people in a culture of poverty. In so far as the above data point at a correlation between economic deprivation and social disorganization, as expressed by the nature of interpersonal relations within the household, a brief contemplation of the debates on the culture of poverty hypothesis seems warranted. Review of the subject at this stage must neccessarily be brief and incomplete as the exposition of the social and economic situation of the Aboriginal community is not yet complete.

Three closely related questions must be considered. They concern, firstly, the pejorative quality attributed by some to the family relations of those living in a poverty culture; secondly, the policies recommended to end this way of life; thirdly the contending views of the nature of the behaviour pattern of the poor, one understanding it primarily as a situational response, the other as a self-perpetuating way of life relatively independent of external conditions.

Many social scientists taking an interest in people allegedly living in a culture of poverty, show an explicit or implicit depreciation of their family life, particularly of the relations between husbands and wives and between fathers and children. Critics of this position point out that one should not evaluate the behaviour of these people by the standards of the middle class and some even go so far, as Glazer (1971:42) notes, " .... to deny that what we have is a culture of poverty in the pejorative sense of that term at all. If there are families headed by women, it testifies to their strength. If there are more illegitimate children, it testifies to greater honesty and greater love of children ....".

An evaluation by social scientist of the way of life of a people purely in terms of better or worse seems rather fruitless. Basically it is up to people themselves to decide whether their way of life is good or not. The social scientist's task is to show how the historical development of socio-economic structures and ideas has influenced this way of life and how existing structures will continue to influence its future direction. It is in the light of this task I think that the evaluation of peoples culture should be seen. Those who stress the negative quality of some of the intra-family relations discussed above generally fear that it will impair the adaptive capacity of the poor to the wider society around them. Growing up in a social environment of this nature, they assume, will not instill in a child the mental pattern,

or attitudes, necessary to compete successfully for a good position in the socioeconomic hierarchy of the society in which it lives. Something of this outlook, for instance, rings through in Smith and Biddle's words when they say: ".... de facto marriages and remarriages are common enough happenings among the Brisbane Aborigines to be a cause of concern in regard to their integration" (Smith and Biddle, 1975:28). In criticism of this point of view it has been said that one should not put undue stress on the "pathological" aspects of the behaviour pattern of some of the poor. By doing this social scientists will divert attention from the need for fundamental social and economic changes and will give those making policy decisions an incentive to offer help of a socio-therapeutic nature only.

Implied in this debate, of course, are assumptions as to the continued existence of the behaviour pattern associated, by Lewis and others, with the culture of poverty. This, then, takes us to the heart of the "culture of poverty" hypothesis. Two main positions can be distinguished: that of the people who see the behaviour pattern concerned as a situational response and that of those who see it as a truly cultural pattern based on socially transmitted norms and aspirations. According to the first view deviation from the norms of the wider society, as for instance shown in marriage and parental relations and attitudes, is mainly a response to failure and frustration experienced by the poor in trying to live up to the "normal" behaviour pattern, particularly in the economic sphere. The way of life exhibited by the people having a "culture" of poverty in this view, then, is determined by the prevailing economic opportunity structure. Others, in contrast with this, bring forward that the deviant behaviour pattern is based on a belief and norm system which is handed on from generation to generation and in this sense, to a certain degree, is independent of external material conditions.

In his work on Black "streetcorner" men of a ghetto community in the United States Hannerz (1969, 1973), to my mind, sheds light on this question. Recognizing the influence on the lives of ghetto dwellers of the social and economic patterns of the wider society, while at the same time acknowledging the truly cultural nature of certain aspects of ghetto-specific behaviour, Hannerz avoids the rigidity of either of the opposing views mentioned above. The opposition between the ecological-economic explanation on the one hand, and cultural explanations on the other, to his mind presents

a fruitless and false dichotomy. It is very well possible, Hannerz (1973:261) asserts, ".... that the first stage in the evolution of the specifically ghetto life style (for instance, males' emphasis on sexual ability, drinking, and so forth, D.) consisted of a multiplicity of identical but largely independent adaptations from the existing cultural background - mainstream or otherwise - to the given opportunity structure .... But the second stage of adaptation involves a perception of the first-stage adaptation as a normal condition, a state of affairs which from then on can be expected". People of the ghetto live in a bicultural situation in which two cultures ".... provide different models for living". The two cultures vary in completeness in so far as ".... the ghetto-specific culture, as distinct from mainstream culture, is not a 'complete' culture covering all areas of live". Moreover, there is a difference between them as to the degree in which they are realistic to the ghetto men. As Hannerz (1973:264) explains, ".... the ghetto specific culture is often taken to forecast what one can actually expect from life, while the mainstream norms are held up as perhaps ultimately more valid but less attainable under the given situational constraints".

Hannerz' view is attractive because it gives a more flexible explanation of behaviour and culture than the extreme views mentioned above. People are not puppets who automatically respond to the "pull" of extern conditions. The influence of the milieu is mediated by the image that they have of their outside world and such images are socially shared and reinforced, and thus gain momentum of themselves. On the other hand, common beliefs and value orientations cannot be too far out of touch with reality lest they become unworkable as a design for living. More importantly maybe, Hannerz points out that such beliefs and values are by no means rigid and uniform patterns which hold the same weight for everyone in the society concerned. They can change according to social position and situations in which people find themselves.

Although the data I have gathered in Carnarvon seem to point at a correlation between nuclear family disorganization and economic deprivation, I would hesitate to conclude to a specific causal relation between these two. We need to know a lot more about the beliefs that Aboriginal people hold of their position in the wider society and of their relations with White Australians before we can ac-

curately trace out the relation between socioeconomic structure and behaviour pattern. As I intend to deal with some of these beliefs in a later chapter I will not discuss them extensively here. Bearing in mind that Aboriginal people have no uniform and static belief and value system, however, it can briefly be said that the beliefs and aspirations prevailing in the White society to various extents are known among the Aborigines and, for certain ones of them and at different occasions, may serve as a model for behaviour. Yet, it would go too far to say that all Aboriginal behaviuour is a reaction to frustrated attempts to live up to White standards. Within their own community Aborigines have cultural traditions of their own which, although not immutable, of course, will determine their perception of opportunities for change.

CHAPTER 5

THE POSITION OF ABORIGINES IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

The development of Aboriginal-White relations in the Gascoyne and adjacent district has led to a total breakdown of the Aborigines' traditional means of subsistence. Probably more than happened to sedentary agriculturalists the hunting and gathering Aborigines, who were denied free access to their domains, suffered a clear break with the traditional material basis of their way of life. The ruinous influence this has had on their culture they share with certain groups of North- and South American Indians and other hunting peoples who have been forcibly drawn into a market economy by direct contact with European colonists who robbed them of their land.

Today Aborigines in the Gascoyne district are fully dependent on the economic system of the wider Australian society. The majority of men have become wage labourers, a few work as constructors, others draw an income through various social service benefits. As far as their employment is concerned the Gascoyne Aborigines at present seem to be at an important juncture in the course of their history. Increasingly they have to turn from employment at the sheep stations to jobs in the town, a change which has far-reaching consequences for the whole pattern of their life. Working and living on the sheep stations put an end to traditional Aboriginal patterns of subsistence, it restrained their freedom of movement, and thoroughly influenced a multitude of other aspects of Aboriginal life. Yet, it still enabled Aborigines to be in close contact with their country and its physical and spiritual features which played such a big role in their comprehension of the origin, present, and future of Aboriginal life. Moreover, traditional skills like tracking and their unrivaled knowledge of the bush, could be put to use in their work. Living and working in town, on the other hand, mean a much more radical break with the Aboriginal past; in a way comparable with migration to an unknown country. Since the second world war and particularly since the second part of the fifties, Aborigines in the district have increasingly moved into the town. But the majority of wage earners retained their work on the stations and it is only rather recently that these workers turn to employment in the town. Others, particularly part Aboriginal people, have a longer history of town residency and employ-

ment. Better adapted to the requirements of town life they were among the first to be "selected for assimilation" and were given good homes in town. In economic terms they form today's Aboriginal upper class.

The economic pattern of the region.

Like the whole of Northwestern Australia, the Gascoyne district shows a dominant position of primary and tertiary industry and a very weak secondary industry.

Primary industry includes resources like the pastoral industry, mining, fishing and agriculture. For a long time the pastoral industry has been the main economic activity in the Gascoyne district, in fact it provided the incentive for the White settlers to occupy the area. Today the role of the sheep stations in the overall economic pattern of the region is far more modest. Even within the sector of the primary industry the predominant role of the grazing of sheep is under attack. Since the thirties, for instance, plantation agriculture has been established along the banks of the Gascoyne river, in the sixties a salt mine started its operations some 40 miles outside Carnarvon, and a fishing industry, with varying success, has been active in the area since the nineteen twenties.

Secondary industry involves the manufacturing of goods, but a number of factors obstruct the development of such an industry in regions like that of the Gascoyne. As Kerr (1962:272-73,285) says of the Northwest in general: "...if we examine the main factors determining the location of manufacturing industry, namely fuel and power, water, raw materials, labour, transport facilities, climatic and physical characteristics and local and external markets, it can be clearly seen that there are no reasons why we might expect the course of development of manufacturing industry in Northwestern Australia to have been any different from what in fact it was, namely slow and halting .... Because the region does not boast a large population and therefore lacks a strong all-round demand, those manufacturing activities that do exist are concerned with very localized consumer production, for example the baking of bread, or with processing the region's primary products".

Tertiary industry includes the provision of community services in fields as health, education, law, social services. It also comprises activities like public administration, communication, building and construction, wholesale and retail distribution, banking and entertainment.

Following this three-fold economic classification the percentages of the workforce in the Gascoyne area in each of these major industries are given in table 12.

Table 12.
Numbers of workers and percentages of total workforce in the primary, secondary and tertiary industry in the local government areas of Carnarvon and Upper Gascoyne in the years 1947, 1954 and 1971. (Source: 1947, 1954 and 1971 Censuses).

	Total	Primary Workforce		Secondary Workforce		Tertiary Workforce	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1947	1204	794	66	22	2	388	32
1954	1958	1270	65	54	3	634	32
1971	3028	1073	35	69	2	1886	63

Most notable in this table, apart from the remarkably low percentage of people working in the secondary industry, is the decline of the role of the primary industry in the period from 1954 to 1971 and the spectacular growth in the same period of the tertiary industry. Considering the figures for the primary industry it should be borne in mind that in 1947 no persons at all were employed in the mining industry, against 254 in 1971. During that period, moreover, the numbers of people working in agriculture increased with more than 200 and the number of workers in the fishing industry also grew. The pastoral industry, then, primarily accounts for the decline of employment in this sector of the economy and as the sheep stations have traditionally been the main source of Aboriginal employment, the effects of this decrease on the lives of the Aboriginal people have been great.

At present the tertiary industry is the dominant economic activity in the district. The distribution of numbers of people employed in the various sectors of the tertiary industry as at 1971 is given in the table on the next page.

Table 13.
Number of persons employed in the various tertiary activities in the local government areas of Carnarvon and Upper Gascoyne as at 30 June 1971. (Source: 1971 Census).

Electricity	15
Construction	287
Wholesale and retail	427
Transport, storage	146
Communication	81
Finance	60
Public administration, defence	92
Community services	388
Entertaiment etc.	163
Other and not stated	227

The growth of the tertiary sector has been heavily dependent on government expenditure. Electricity supply, construction, communication, public administration and community services in particular are supported with government fund.

With the exeption of some of the jobs in the transport, construction and community services sector, nearly all the work of the tertiary industry is concentrated in Carnarvon town. All the plantations, moreover, are situated in the vicinity of the town just as the salt mine which employs nearly all the mining workers in the district. More than three quarters of the available jobs in the Carnarvon and Upper Gascoyne local government areas, covering more than 100.000 square kilometers, are concentrated in the town of Carnarvon.

Unless something unexpected happens, like the discovery of important exploitable mineral deposits, the economy of the region will not change drastically in the foreseeable future. For the Aboriginal employment pattern this implies that the present trend of a decreasing proportion of rural workers will continue. In meeting the pressure this will create on the town labour market the government should be able to play an influential role.

Aboriginal employment and unemployment.

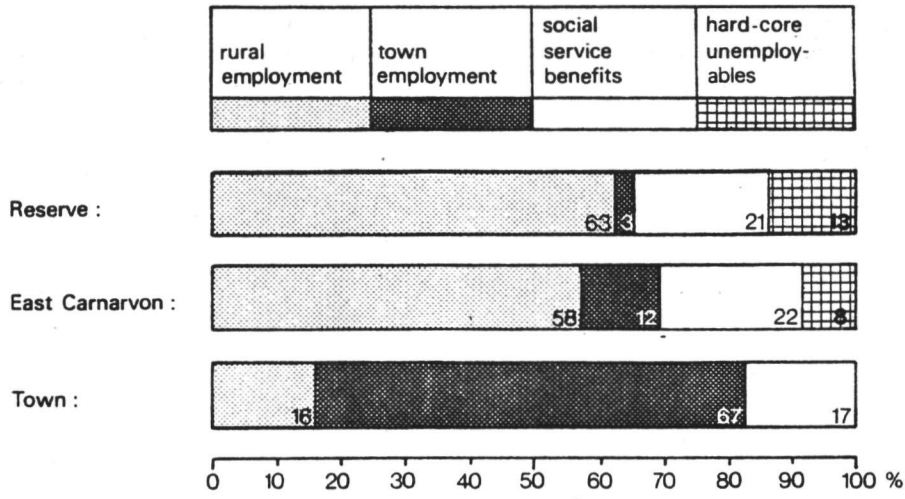
Since the arrival of Whites in the Gascoyne district Aborigines have been mainly rural workers. Employment in the towns is a rather recent phenomenon. Of all the men who were interviewed only 3 percent started their working

career in a town while the others got their first job in a rural setting. If this figure is compared with the data given in the previous chapter about the social environment in which people have grown up, it will be noted that the percentage of people who grew up in a town environment actually is higher than that of the ones who started work in a job in town. This, in fact, still occurs today when the majority of Aboriginal families live in the town while the larger part of male wage earners work on the sheep stations in the rural area. Anyway, the majority of male respondents began their working career on a pastoral station, others started off on farms in the southwest of the State, in railway and roadgangs operating in the bush, or in droving and fencing teams that travelled through the outback country.

As was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, leaving their jobs and residences at the sheep stations has been a crucial moment in the history of the Aborigines in the Northwest of Australia, and this proces still goes on today. It is the tragedy of these people, in fact, that loosening ties with their tribal countries was the price they had to pay for becoming less dependent on the station owners who used their attachment to the land to keep Aborigines in employment under inferior conditions. Once having made this step, however, Aborigines got more freedom on the labour market and the long term effects of this can be gauged from the socioeconomic position of the group of town dwellers today.

At present the majority of male workers are still in rural employment. Figure 7 shows the percentages of men who are employed in a rural or town occupation and gives some other data on the economic position of the group of adult men as well.

Figure 7.
Percentage of men per residential group who have rural or town employment, receive social service benefits or are hard-core unemployables.
(see next page).



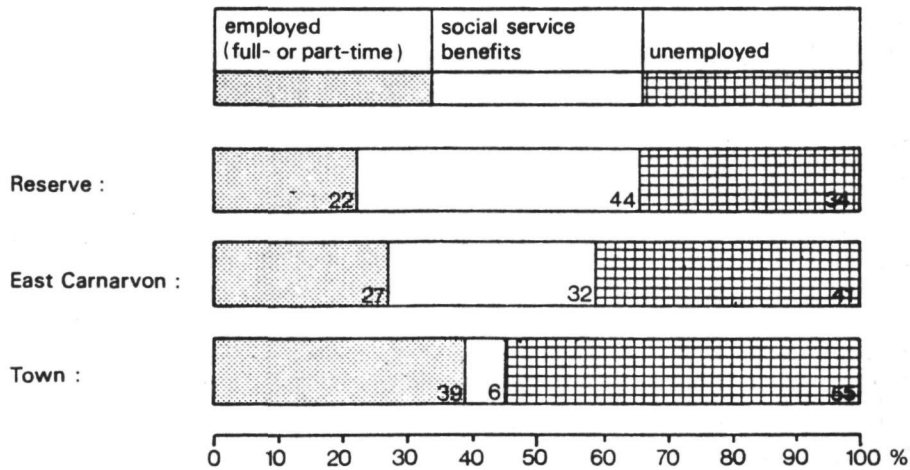
Employment in the town is mainly limited to the people who live in conventional houses in town and whose life style, it was earlier mentioned, is closest to that of the White working class Australians. The occupational pattern of the East Carnarvon men, on the other hand, is very much like that of the men from the Reserve.

Of all the respondents 46 percent are employed in the rural sector, 29 percent in the town, 19 percent draw a long term social service benefit (mainly old-age and invalid pensions) and 6 percent belong in the category of hard-core unemployables. Almost all the rural workers have jobs on the sheep stations in the Carnarvon and Upper Gascoyne districts. On the stations they are occupied in a variety of tasks such as mustering, treating sheep for infectious diseases (tailing, jetting etc.) lambmarking, cleaning wells, repairing fences and windmills. A second much smaller group of rural workers are employed in "road gangs" of the Department of Main Roads, some work as kangarooshooter, fencer, sharefarmer or prospector and a number of the latter are self-employed.

The men who work in town mostly have jobs with government departments like those of Public Works, Civil Aviation, Health, Postmaster General, Main Roads etc. Others are employed by the local Council, the State Electricity Commission or work for private companies. Practically all these men, like the rural workers, are in semi-skilled or unskil-

led jobs, that is, jobs which require no formal training at school or through an apprenticeship. In the course of my research I only came across one man who had passed an apprenticeship and worked as a qualified tradesman. Expectedly, the occupational level is closely correlated with the generally low level of education among the adult Aborigines. Still, as I will show later, there is a significant difference in educational level between men of the town group, on the one hand, and those of the Reserve and East Carnarvon, on the other. As for the women figure 8 gives some data on their employment.

Figure 8.
Percentage of women per residential group who work (full-time or part time), have an income through regular social benefits, or are otherwise unemployed.



Most working women have jobs in town. They work as domestic helps in the hospital, as cleaners in offices or shops, a few are shop assistants, teaching or nursing aides or work seasonally in the local prawn processing plant. Like the men their work is usually of an unskilled or semi-skilled nature, the percentage of women with a formal school qualification, however, is slightly higher than among men. The majority of the working women have part-time jobs of varying regularity and very few households rely on income earned by a working woman. Only 8 percent of all the women interviewed have a regular job in which they work for more than 4 hours a day(1).

This almost exclusively concerns the women of the town group whose income is used to supplement that earned by other members of their household.

Returning to the employment situation of men, the distinction between rural and town employment deserves some attention. Although there is no significant difference in the level of skills needed for a town job and one on the pastoral stations (which constitute some 90 percent of all the jobs in the rural sector) both types of employment vary considerably and correspond with distinctive styles of life. Jobs in town are generally better paid. Men who have a job in town, moreover, can live with their family all the year round whereas the pastoral workers, especially those who have school age children usually have to leave their family behind in town while they live in the bush, sometimes for long periods. One of the most important differences between pastoral work and the jobs in town is the highly unstable and temporary nature of the work on the sheep stations.

In the process which has led to the instability of station employment a number of factors have played a part, but maybe the most basic one has been the increasing pressure on station owners to pay wages to workers whom they could keep at minimal costs before. Introduction of the obligation to pay Aboriginal workers according to the pastoral award rates in 1968 has probably been particularly influential in the present extent of Aboriginal unemployment in the pastoral sector. Moreover, growing mechanization, in first instance a likely consequence of rising labour costs, has made many station workers redundant. Aboriginal knowledge of the bush and the special skills associated with it used to be indispensable for sheep mustering. Today the use of airplanes that are in contact with motorbikes on the ground makes the need for skilled stockmen on the stations less urgent. At present, a station manager said: "we are never short of workers, we can get plenty of men. With an airplane and a motorbike two of us can muster in half a day what took us a couple of days with six natives before". The majority of station hands therefore are in casual employment as Aborigines often pointed out to me:

- Take the stations, they only want them for shearing; not like when the stations kept them permanently. This has been only since these later years, no jobs for them on the stations now.
- Station work is buggered up now. All airplanes and

motorbikes; they only want four blokes.
- It happens often that they only want somebody for a few weeks and then dismiss them again. You have to be a good man to get a permanent job. I don't think the young fellows can find permanent jobs now. The station people do a lot of work with their own family, even girls work. On the other hand, the young blokes don't want to stop at the stations.
- Most of them around here like station work; that makes it hard because the pay is no good and it's not regular work.
- Soon as the shearing is finished you're finished too. They only want the Coloured boys on the stations till the shearing is over and the mustering is over and then the jobs cut out.

That these views are realistic I learned when making a survey of employment opportunities at 16 stations in the Carnarvon and upper Gascoyne district. On these stations a total of 10 men were permanently employed; ten of the stations had no permanent Aboriginal staff at all. Thirteen stations employed casual labour for a total of 352 to 416 man-weeks or 7 to 8 man-years.

Considering that in the Carnarvon and Upper Gascoyne area there are some 60 sheep stations in operation, on the basis of the foregoing figures it can be guessed that a total of 68 to 72 man-years (including temporary and permanent labour) would be available for Aboriginal employment. Giving as a conservative estimate that a total of 135 men in the district can be considered as potential pastoral employees this means that the available man-years are sufficient for half this number only. As the stations offer a considerable part of the total number of man-years in the form of casual work, for periods ranging from three weeks to six months, a typical pattern of employment develops. This is strenghtened by the fact that recruitement of labour is usually on a personal basis, that is, by being familiar with many Aboriginal workers a station owner or his agent can select the "best ones" among them. As a station owner said:"...we've had that many people here to work for us that we can pick the good from the bad, and we'll just hunt around town to find them...or ask others if they are around... that's how we get our labour". In this process a certain gradation of pastoral workers is arrived at, going from a relatively small number of permanent workers,

via those who can find employment for an important part of the year, to the men who work for a few weeks only or not at all. The same selection procedure makes it increasingly difficult for young boys leaving school to find jobs.

Unemployment is rife amongst the Aboriginal men. Its extent is hinted at by figures taken from the District Register of Unemployment and Sickness Benefit Claims. Of the total number of 830 weeks of unemployment registered in the period from July 1971 till June 1972, 369 were put in by Aboriginal workers. In the same period from 1972 till 1973 a total of 1760 weeks of unemployment were listed of which 896 were Aboriginal registrations. Although these figures are bad enough - Aborigines who form not quite one fifth of the Carnarvon population account for roughly half of all the weeks of unemployment registered - they do not even show the true state of affairs. Judging by my own data 3,500 to 4,000 weeks of unemployment per year - for Aboriginal station workers only! - would be far more realistic. This discrepancy in figures can probably be accounted for by the fact that only a minority of unemployed Aborigines actually register at the Commonwealth District Employment Office. Why this is so I will explain in a later section of this chapter.

It appears inevitable, then, that Aboriginal workers must increasingly take up employment in the town. The trend towards mechanization on the stations is unlikely to be reverted and due to overgrazing and soil erosion the numbers of sheep on the stations cannot be drastically increased. However, alternatives for station employment, at the present state of affairs, are limited. Expansion of Carnarvon's economy seems unlikely and relatively few new jobs will become available. On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that a certain proportion of the White population of Carnarvon are temporary residents only. In the eyes of many White Australians physical and social conditions in Northwestern towns are relatively harsh, making them reluctant to take up permanent residence in this part of the country. Significant numbers of White workers come to towns like Carnarvon for a limited period only, in order to save money (wages in the Northwest are relatively high), others are travellers looking for a change in routine, others again are temporarily transferred to the Northwest by the government department or firm for which they work. Therefore, in principle Aborigines, who consider the area concerned as their home, could in-

creasingly take over the jobs which transient Whites leave behind. Whether this will actually occur will, among other things, depend on the willingness of White employers to engage Aboriginal workers and on the skills and training of potential Aboriginal employees. Entering of Aborigines into existing town jobs is hindered by a lack of skills, but also by a reluctance on their part to leave the old familiar sphere of work at the stations.

Job preferences and perception of employment opportunities.

Considering the present and future economic position of Aborigines it is important not only to look at "objective" structural conditions but also at some of the beliefs Aborigines have about the economic aspects of their life. Naturally there is a correlation between external conditions and a cultural belief and value system, but particularly in situations of accelerated environmental change the discrepancy between these two can become quite great. In the Aboriginal community of Carnarvon today it is the people from the Reserve and East-Carnarvon who probably experience such discrepancies most strongly. The economic basis of their existence, and with it their whole pattern of life, is changing rapidly as they are forced to leave their traditional jobs at the sheep stations.

It seems as if economic attitudes which have grown in the paternalistic atmosphere of the sheep stations, where for a long time Aborigines were paid in kind only and until today in many instances still do not get paid the same wages as White workers, are an extra handicap to a number of Aboriginal workers who increasingly have to compete on the tight town labour market. Among the Reserve and East Carnarvon people in general one does not find the same drive for material wealth as among those who live in town and correspondingly the first-named show a greater willingness to share their income with relatives and friends. Something of this attitude was expressed in the words of a man from the Reserve when he said:

- It's our trouble that we pay for all our friends and buy them drinks. When one is broke, we're all broke. When a White man comes from a station he doesn't shout all the Whitefellas a drink. That's different with the Coloured people. There's no hard feeling against a bloke who never works and still asks for drinks from others. Blackfellas have no hard feelings. You're glad to see

people you haven't seen for a long while, after being at the station. We always like to be all together.

Socioeconomic attitudes such as these, it should be stressed, are not static, nor do they constitute the only model for behaviour. As is shown in the words of the man quoted above there is certainly knowledge of the norms regulating White people's economic behaviour and, varying with person and time, such norms may even be used to judge the behaviour of individual members of the Aboriginal group or that of the group as a whole. A young man, now living on the Reserve then in East Carnarvon, once in a conversation unintendedly expressed the ambivalent situations in which Aborigines often find themselves. Himself having been unemployed for a long time and spending his days in idleness, driving around with his mates in an old car from camp to camp, he said:

- It's a bit hard for a Coloured bloke to get a job. They work for a week, get on the piss (slang for drink,D.) and then don't turn up for their work anymore. Some of these blokes don't take a shower for a long time, they got no clothes and try to bum some of me. They only got clothes when they work on the stations, then they're dressed properly, have a shower every night and got a good swag (bundle of personal belongings,D.). When they come back to town they spend all their money on piss and a few days later they got nothing, ... no rug, no swag, no clothes ... then they come to me and ask me: 'lend me a pair of trousers'. If one comes back from the station you see the whole mob following him. I don't mix myself, always stay on my own. I don't like going with the whole mob... people start talking: 'look what they're doing, not working, just drinking'.

In a situation as discussed here where people experience rapid social and cultural change one should be extra careful of generalizing about people's attitudes. Aboriginal beliefs about and attitudes towards economic realities show a complex mixture of original Aboriginal views and preferences, newly developed collective patterns of thought, fleeting situational adaptations, and views directly taken over from Whites. In their preferences for certain types of jobs and their perception of employment opportunities all these influences carry weight.

When asked if they were happy with their present occupa-

tion a great majority of respondents said they were quite happy with it (78 percent), Only 10 percent of them said they disliked their job and 12 percent were undecided. Only half of the respondents who would like a change of job wanted one which required more formal training than the one they held at that moment. Such jobs normally offer better pay, but this was certainly not always given as a reason for their preference; they also referred to more immaterial working conditions such as regular working hours, more spare time, or greater variation in their work task.

Nearly all the men from the town group favoured a job in town and usually were highly critical of the jobs on the sheep stations. Low wages on the stations were most frequently mentioned as the main ground for their aversion and some also mentioned the fact that a pastoral job would mean that they would have to leave their families behind in town. Some examples of the answers given are shown below:

- I work as an operator. I'd never go back to a station again. Better money in town, although they (the station owners D.) have to pay the basic wage now. The squatters think that if you're coloured they don't have to pay you good money. They say you're useless anyway and give you whatever they want to give you.
- I was making nothing at the station, so I might as well come and live with my kids.
- I prefer work in the bush but wouldn't want to work on a station. The squatters don't like paying too high wages, they like cheap labour.
- I'm getting sick of bush jobs. Always have to leave the kids behind, they cry when I leave.

In contrast with this men from the Reserve and East Carnarvon generally prefer work in the bush specifically on the sheep stations. Typically, men in this category as a rule did not spontaneously give a reason for their choice. When explicitly asked about this they often said that they had lived in the bush all their life, that they had never known any other work but that on the stations, A middleaged man explained:

- We have come to town for a change, but we go back to the station as soon as possible. Bush is better than town.... we was brought up in the bush... we have been in the bush ever since... since they started work. Them days they got on the horse as big as C. (his 12year old son, D.).

When I asked pastoral workers explicitly if the better wages of town jobs were not more attractive to them, some men hastened to assure me that money earned in town would be spent immediately and that, in fact, in the bush a man could save some money:

- I'm happy with my job, would never want to work in town although I can make more money there. In town you can't save money.
- I prefer a station job. Better life on stations. When a man is in town he just goes to the pub.
- You can save more out in the bush. You gotta pay for everything in town, besides of going to the pub every night.
- Of course you can make more money working in town, but you spend that money on drinks anyway. You need a lot of willpower if you work in town.
- I would like a permanent job, but not in town... you got all your friends and relations and they all go against you if you don't give anything. I'd be rather in the bush where a man gets three meals a day and he got something in him to go to work. In town you just can't refuse a mate a drink.

Such answers are illustrative of the fact that, in a sense, these men recognize economic norms of the Whites even though many of them do not want to, or are unable to, live by them. The men who defend their choice of occupation by reference to the typical White value of frugality, in fact, save very little money on the stations where they are poorly paid and meet with high costs particularly for travelling to and from their work. Besides, once they return to town their savings are often spent very quickly treating relations and friends to drinks, but basically because they have no income while staying in town.

In a way these answers also exemplify how Aborigines are torn between two ways of life. On the one hand the familiar life at the stations where, despite many drawbacks, a man is in an environment he knows and is fond of, on the other, the life in town where many of them are subjected to heavy drinking and consequently meet with strife and tension in their social relations. Still, relatives and friends attract station workers to the town and the biggest drawback of pastoral employment to these men does not appear to be the poor wages paid, but the necessity of leaving the Aboriginal community which has now established itself in the town. Al-

though economic necessity undoubtedly has forced them into a pattern of temporary employment on the stations, the transientness of much Aboriginal labour, about which station owners ironically enough complain so much, is also caused by the longing of workers to be among their relatives and friends. In a typical choice of words this ambiguity which has been forced upon Aborigines was phrased by a station owner whom I asked whether the move of Aborigines into the town was a voluntary one: "No", he said, "I don't think it is...and even today the half-caste with his predominance of Aboriginal instincts is hoping to get back in the bush. But he can't get away from the old community spirit and we can't afford to have them in communities any longer. I sort of keep getting back to this theme of community living, but it's one I remember so well from my childhood...it's a family affair and in the old days we used to be able to afford to keep perhaps a family of six to keep one man... Now I've got only one chap here and he's a darn good boy...but I've got to send him back to town every six weeks or two months...let him get robbed...let him have his roll over and usually come back with V.D. or something like this and put him back to work again".

Asking people about the changes they have of finding work as compared to the White people, the majority of respondents appeared rather optimistic. Of all the people asked 6 percent thought that basically Aborigines don't have the same changes for jobs as the Whites, a further 15 percent thought there was no categorical discrimination of Aborigines in this respect but that their chances depended on certain circumstances; it was said, for instance:

- The ones that have been in this town for a long time have no problems, but it's more difficult for strangers.
- They can always find labouring jobs but none of them has a trade.
- You got them at the Public Works Department, Main Roads, the Shire and that. Of course, you don't see Coloured blokes at the tracking station...you got to have an education for that.

65 Percent of the respondents thought that Aborigines had the same opportunities for finding jobs as the Whites and, complete off the picture, 14 percent said they didn't know.

Views of employment opportunities are certainly determined by circumstances. Even though, objectively speaking,

Aborigines still meet with much obstruction, compared to the past there are more openings for employment now and particularly the range of jobs open to Aboriginal workers has changed considerably. A man told me how in the mid-sixties he left Carnarvon because he could not get a job in town:

- You could only go bush. I got a shock when I came back and saw Coloured people working for the Council and the Public Works Department.

Others also emphasized the difference with the past:

- It used to be very difficult for us to find a job. Now the attitudes towards the Coloured people have changed a hundred percent... it really is a big change.
- Now they have (the same chances,D.), not in the old days. Things certainly have improved, but a lot of these young buggers, young blokes that is, don't see that.

Dealing with this question quite a number of respondents expressed the view that Aborigines have equal opportunities for finding work provided they have the "correct" attitudes towards work. In their answers these respondents expressed awareness and sometimes explicit approval of the standards held by the Whites with regard to correct working behaviour. Some Aborigines according to them lack such attitudes. As it was said:

- They have the same opportunities as the White people, that is, if they're willing to work hard.
- Well, the boss wants reliable workers. When I worked on the plantations some Aboriginal people got paid every day, but then they didn't come back and went on a drinking spree.
- They (employers D.) always try Coloured people but when they (Coloured people D.) go to a station they get a bottle a night and get on a sort of a bludge then. They get lazy and get cunning. I reckon the fathers are to blame in the first place, they should keep them working, don't let them loaf around. That's the worst part... the 18-20 years olds don't go out...hang around the Reserve... fall back on the Reserve. They boss the old people around for pension money, that's why the fights start. No shortage of jobs here in Carnarvon... the council puts a lot on every day, but then they don't turn up...the other day sixteen don't turn up my cousin told me.

- There's no discrimination; then again you get some blokes that get a good job around town and leave that with the first pay and make it bad for the good ones. The White people judge us by these blokes then.
- Some Coloured people want to work, others don't. Most of them don't like work in town. In East Carnarvon many work on the Main Roads and the Council but here on the Reserve we only work on stations. I think that if the Jamadjis accept the White ways they get a job.

Reflecting on the views Aborigines have of their employment opportunities one can ask himself whether knowledge of them increases understanding of the socio-economic situation of the Aboriginal community? I think it does. It shows the discrepancy which may exist between sociostructural realities and people's perception thereof. What is more, it points out how members of the Aboriginal minority group itself at times hold the same view of their place in the economic opportunity structure as the members of the dominant White majority. Among the latter there is very little understanding of the social and economic conditions which have determined the Aborigines' present situation. Real, but more usually imagined, inability of Aboriginal workers to live up to the accepted standards of working behaviour is usually blamed on the Aborigines themselves with complete disregard of White responsibility for the conditions that influence these behaviour patterns. It is ironic that Aborigines who do set their economic goals in terms of White values often adopt these negative stereotypes of Aboriginal economic behaviour held by the Whites.

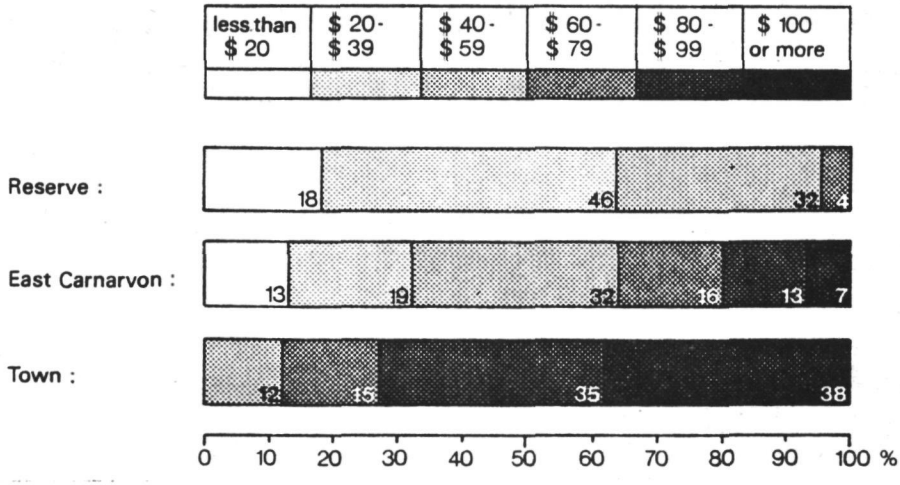
Income Patterns.

Taking poverty in the sense of relative material deprivation, many of the Aboriginal people of Carnarvon can be called poor. Some at times are even unable to provide for the basic necessities of life such as food and shelter, and in this respect can be considered as poor in an absolute sense.

Talking about the incomes of Aboriginal households it should be realized that sometimes it is difficult to get exact information on this topic, not because people are reluctant to tell how much they earn, but mainly because many households have a very irregular income pattern. This is particularly so for households that depend on incomes gained through work in the pastoral industry. Pastoral

workers may even be unable to tell how much exactly they earn per week but only know the approximate amount of money they have brought home after a working period at the station. This concerns net earnings after the employer has deducted tax, food and clothing bills, costs of taxi-trips etc.. Apart from this, in calculating household incomes one should take into account the often long and irregular periods of unemployment to which particularly pastoral workers are subjected. During such periods some may get Unemployment Benefit but definitely not all of them. As I will point out in greater detail later, Aborigines, in spite of popular belief, certainly do not make excessive use of social service benefits. At the time of interviewing, for instance, 8 percent of all the households investigated had no income at all. Another thing to be reckoned with is that at irregular intervals the income of a household may either be supplemented or reduced by relatives or friends who temporarily join the household. Under these conditions it will be very difficult to assess the income of households by means of a survey method. Having been in the community for nearly a year and being closely familiar with many of its members I believe I have been able to get fairly reliable income figures, yet, they can still be approximates only. Figure 9 shows the distribution of incomes of Aboriginal households.

Figure 9 (see next page).
Weekly Household Income. Percentages of households within income categories given for each residential group separately.



According to the Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (1975:13-14), at August 1973 a weekly income of $62.70 for a couple with two children should be considered as the "poverty line". Judging by this standard the poverty amongst Aborigines in Carnarvon is very great indeed, particularly if one considers that many Aboriginal households consist of more than four persons. Average household size for the Reserve, East Carnarvon and the town is 6.1, 6.4 and 6.2 respectively and only the really permanent members are included in these figures. On account of the great mobility among Aborigines, particularly of young adults, households may even double in size, but such fluctuations are not taken into account here. Another thing to be reckoned with is that in isolated northern towns like Carnarvon, prices are generally significantly higher than in the towns in the southern part of Australia and that consequently here the poverty line should be at a higher level. Taking all this into account it can be safely concluded that nearly two thirds (62 percent) of all the households included in my sample live in poverty, sometimes of an extreme nature.

The low income of households is a consequence partly of the lack of education and professional training of the bread-winners who are therefore constrained to do work of an unskilled or semi-skilled nature. This by itself, however, does not explain Aboriginal poverty. Many of the men from the town group have unskilled jobs but still have a reasonable income. More important as a cause of poverty

are work in the pastoral industry, unemployment and dependence on government social benefits of some sort.

Since many Aborigines still feel attracted to station work and as mechanization increasingly makes their services redundant, station owners often can get away with paying low wages to their employees and unemployment in this sector of the economy is high. Despite the fact that since 1968 Aborigines are entitled to wages according to the Federal Pastoral Industry Award, station owners still get round the requirements of the Federal Award since only union members are covered by award provisions and very few Aborigines belong to a union. When interviewing station owners and managers some of them freely admitted that they did not pay their Aboriginal workers the standard wages, others said they paid according to the award. Something of the employers' attitudes regarding payment of Aborigines, the cheating, the powerful negotiating position employers have on the labour market, but also of the possible inability of the stations in the long run to compete with other economic sectors in the field of wages, are perfectly summed up in a long statement of a station owner:

> "I think the whole question of pay in this area...you know when you get down to the nitty gritty of it...is first of all that you try the person to see what he's capable of, see how reliable he is, if he's loyal...you concentrate on that...I do not pay full award rates to the normal casual labour and people say 'you're foolish to admit it', but my attitude is that when I ring up a bloke and say: 'look I've tried you before, now I reckon you're worth this much, if you don't want to work for that much you don't have to come...but there's no argument when they get out here. Now there are other people that say 'yes I pay the award', but when you ask them 'do you issue them with a statement' you know, give them an account of wages and this type of thing, they say 'oh...yes', you know: stores 47 dollars, stores 64 dollars...! So, basically: no I don't think very many of us, unless we got some particular Aboriginal that we specifically want to keep and that we're attached to... on the main we're not paying full award rates, because, count it out: I don't think they're worth it...you cannot put a half-trained horse into harness, this is just the basis of it...but I pay them what I consider a fair wage and the other thing is: what quality of keep do you

give them...how much is it worth to put a bloke in a boughshed or in a tent or put him into something where he's got hot and cold water and decent toilet facilities, all this is an added cost: electricity and decent food...you're going to find a terrific range in this and you'll find some terrific stories because I think most of us are terrified that we're going to have the 'award fellows' landing on our shoulders and we're going to be in serious trouble. It boils down to this that if we don't get a clearance or some form of dispensation where we can pay their worth we will be paying them nothing because we won't employ them and this is silly because they're clambering over themselves to come out here at the moment, but you just can't afford them at the rates that we're supposed to pay them...and the other factor that comes in if you're mixing White with Black, or Grey or Brown or whatever colour you like to call them...the White bloke will say: 'well, if he's worth the award rate, what am I worth..?'. Then I'll say: 'hang on Charlie, you're living in better conditions than he is, for a start, you're getting a few more amenities, a few more perks'. 'Yeah, but listen that bloke has been sitting down there while I...you know..I'm the boy that's got to turn the screw he just passes me the nut...' and so the whole scale goes crazy again, it's a very invidious one this, but basically it gets back to economics. Is is economically impossible for us to keep any type of person...we cannot find the people that we want and if we find them we can't afford to pay them. I know it sounds like a sob story, but how can you compete with...you know a 19 or 20 years old boy who can go and get 200 dollars up at Texada (the local salt mine, D.) driving a bulldozer...you can't compete, there's no way in the world".

Yet, there are also employers who try to give their station hands a fair deal. A pastoralist who was rather popular amongst Aborigines said: "It has been done where they pay a White man one wage and a Blackfella another one, that's been going on for years. That's wrong, they do the same amount of work...we've always paid them the award rate... whatever it is supposed to be...Some people say: 'but oh ... they're not worth it', but there is a lot of White men that aren't worth it, a big heap of them".
Employers like this are scarce, unfortunately, and appear

to be under strong social pressure to conform to the standards set by the majority, as one of them reported: "We have always paid full Native labour full wages and assisted them where we can. We feel a little bit bitter about some aspects of the treatment the Jamadjis are getting...I don't know anyone else that pays basic wage to Native employees, and we, to a large degree, have been ostracized because of the way we treat the Natives here. We've got neighbours all around us and we don't have any social life with any of them...".

The whole question of Aboriginal Wages in the pastoral industry then is a rather nebulous one, only a handful of more or less permanent hands receiving the legal minimum wage. Pastoral workers are generally ignorant of their rights and have very little knowledge of legal minimum wages, holiday pay and other benefits they may be entitled to on account of their work. When they are going out to a station usually they don't even know how much they are going to earn and, as mentioned briefly before, on returning from the station many still don't know how much their weekly wage was. A young man whom I asked about his wages said:

- I don't really know. I think I have about 25 dollars a week; beer food and tax taken out.

In principle station hands receive an account sheet (a statement) which indicates how much they have earned and what part of their earnings they have spent for drinks, clothes and other things they have bought while at the station. Often, however, such statements are not given and if they are the majority of men, being illiterate, are unable to read and check them. It was remarkable and typical of the attitudes of pastoral workers that very few of them expressed a distrust in the employers' calculations, yet, some remarks of this nature were made:

- Tucker bills are high, they can charge you what they like, I'm sure there are some who overcharge, really.
- Some station blokes give a proper statement, others don't give anything; they rob the Jamadjis.
- While I was at the station I could never make money. They book you for stores and that. You only come back with fifty dollars or so.

Earnings of pastoral workers are strongly reduced by the fact that usually they travel to and from their work

in a taxi, often over distances of hundred, two hundred kilometers and more. The costs of such trips are sometimes equivalent to one or two, or even more weeks wages and, indeed, it happens that men return from a station where they have worked for a short period, practically without a cent in their pocket. It so happens that in Carnarvon a local taxi company is also the main employment agent for Aboriginal pastoral workers. Station owners who want employees contact the people from the taxicompany who then go and look for suitable candidates for the jobs. Almost without exception the men chosen are taken out to the station in a taxi of the same company. About the nature of this mediation a pastoralist said: "X doesn't charge the Aborigines anything if they go out in his taxi, otherwise he charges them the ordinary employment fee. He gets cunning sometimes and brings them in one after the other... one a day". Another station owner said: "They charge no fee at all; they make enough out of them anyway in taxifares". In principle, of course, men cannot be compelled to travel to their job in a taxi, but may also take the mail truck which makes a run to the stations once a week. Some Aboriginal informants, however, pointed out that they are under pressure to take the taxi. As one of them said:

- They like you to go out in one of their taxis, otherwise you spoil your chances for a next time.

Another man, talking about his job preferences, remarked:

- I wouldn't mind a permanent job myself. I would give up station work then. You go out in a taxi and end up with 'bugger all'. X. goes and looks for a man, the first thing he says: "I got a job, you come out now". If you say no, I want to go out on the mailtruck he says: "Allright, I ring up station". Station says no, bring him now, and if he doesn't come get somebody else.

A number of households, directly or indirectly, permanently or temporarily, rely on some form of government assistance. Social service benefits received are, among others, old age, invalid, or widow's pensions, deserted wife's allowance, child endowment, unemployment benefit. Talking about this aspect of Aboriginal income it cannot be stressed strongly enough that there is absolutely no question of misuse of social service benefits by Aborigines, as so many White Australians contend. On the contrary, Aborig-

ines do not make full use of the opportunities and rights offered to them through these benefits.

A good illustration of this is the extent to which Aborigines use the unemployment benefit. While carrying out my fieldwork I was constantly struck by the fact that unemployed men or women who were really battling, sometimes even to provide themselves with a fundamental necessity as food, did not apply for unemployment benefit. In fact, it would not be exaggerated to say that at that time the majority of unemployed Aborigines did not apply for financial support while they were eligible for it. Two thirds of all the men interviewed said they had never received unemployment benefit and the majority of them had never even applied for it. My own observations confirmed that this information was very reliable. It was rather difficult to find out the reasons for this reluctance to register for unemployment benefit. About one third of the men interviewed said that they had never been unemployed, which in a number of cases I knew to be untrue. Others said they did not really know and when pressing them for an answer some said they could not be bothered or that they hoped to get a job soon anyway. As I got to know many of the men better, it appeared that often they did not like to go to the employment office as this involved filling in forms and answering questions which was difficult for them since many could not read or write, or very poorly. When I accompanied men to the employment office they often asked me to fill in their form and also to keep the form they were to hand in the next week. Many of them lived in dwellings that had no cupboards or other depositories for safekeeping of papers, some just camped in the scrub. Some of the reasons why Aborigines do not apply for, or do not receive, unemployment benefit are illustrated by the statements given below:

- I never apply for unemployment benefit, it isn't worth it, they reckon a man is lazy, they probably think I'm a pensioner.
- Unemployment benefit takes you too long to get; too much red tape.
- I refuse social service, that's what the White people always complain about: the Aboriginal people relying on social service too much, but not me!
- I applied for unemployment benefit once, they gave me a paper but I didn't know how to fill it in.

Then also, there were the cases of people who formally

were not entitled to any monetary assistance whatsoever but who were, nevertheless, by all reasonable standards, unable to provide for themselves. Certain women, for instance, without dependent children and left by their husbands were in a particular difficult spot. Often still too young to apply for an old age pension and unable to find work they were not eligible for unemployment benefit either and had to be supported by relatives.

Also in the field of old age pensions, deserted wife's allowances etc. Aborigines do not always get what they are entitled to. Interviewing people I came across several households living in great poverty and without any income, apart from assistance offered by friends and relations. Investigating their situation more closely it appeared that a number of them were eligible for a social service benefit of some kind. Some, in fact, had applied for a benefit but had unjustly been refused, others were unaware of the possibilities open to them and had never put in an application. So, apart from the fact that at the time of this research social security payments were too low to keep a family above the poverty line, or only marginally so, a number of people were even missing out on financial support altogether. The historically grown dependence of Aborigines on officers of government agencies undoubtedly played an important role in this, and it may therefore be useful to glance back in history to see how Aborigines fared who could not support themselves by working.

As was shown in chapter two, during the first years of settlement of the Gascoyne district the government supplied rations of food and blankets to destitute Aborigines, Then, probably taking the view that the sheep stations were instrumental in the poverty of Aborigines, the government pressed the station owners to take care of those who were unable to support themselves. As pressure on the labour market increasingly forced pastoralists to pay wages to Aboriginal workers, willingness of the former to provide for inactive Aborigines lessened and the government had to step up its rationing programs again. Needy Aborigines however, reviewed no payments in cash. Under the Commonwealth Social Services (Consolidation) Act until the early 1940's payment of old age and invalid pensions, maternity allowances, and child endowment to other than persons of half or less Aboriginal descent was not provided for (cf. Biskup, 1973:144; Report Royal Comm. 1974:21). In 1941 payment of child endowment to children of all detribalized

Aborigines was granted and the last mentioned also became eligible for sickness and unemployment benefit. In 1942 people who were of more than half Aboriginal descent became entitled to receive old age and invalid pension and maternity allowances, but only if they were exempted from the application of the 1936 Native Administration Act, which hardly any of them was. When, according to Biskup, (1973:249), in 1949 "...the Minister for Native Affairs asked the Minister for the Interior to extend old-age pensions and maternity benefits ... to all detribalized aborigines, the latter replied that this could be achieved by a more judicious grant of exemptions by the department. Since an exempted aborigine found himself not only outside the jurisdiction but also outside the protection of the department, (the Commissioner of Native Affairs) did not accept the advice; in his opinion, an aborigine should not have to renounce the protection of the department merely to qualify for social service benefits". In 1954 it was ruled that exemption of Aborigines only freed them from the restrictive provisions of the Native Administration Act while they could still enjoy the protection of the Department of Native Affairs. This, says Biskup, (ibid), "opened the way for a wholesale grant of exemptions to enable all Aborigines to qualify for social service benefits". Whether this actually happened would require special study; documents from the Gascoyne district, however, suggest that eligible Aborigines who took initiatives themselves indeed got social service benefits, but that the department did little to take the lead in these matters. Moreover, there are many indications to believe that the department was reluctant to release its control of Aborigines by granting them exemptions. Throughout the history of governmental concern with Aborigines in Western Australia one thing was painfully clear: the almost complete absence of any really positive measures to assist Aborigines in coping with their new environment. Symbolic for this was the fact that until the nineteen fifties local police officers, in their capacity of Protectors of Aborigines, were responsible for Aboriginal welfare.

In 1949 the department began to appoint "district officers" in full time service who became responsible for the control and protection of Aborigines on the regional level. These districts became very influential in Aboriginal life, particularly in areas like the Gascoyne district where Aborigines were relatively unsophisticated in their dealings

with White society. As employment opportunities on the stations deteriorated and old, sick or otherwise disabled Aborigines became increasingly dependent on social services the influence of the district officers grew. Acting as intermediaries for people who needed financial support the district officers, in fact, decided who was eligible for support and who was not. When, for instance, (and this still happened in the nineteen sixties) someone applied for an old age or invalid pension it was the district officer who had to answer questions as: "Is the applicant of good character? Is the applicant of reasonably advanced intelligence? Do the living conditions of claimant approximate those of a white standard? Is the applicant capable of handling his/her own pension if granted?" (DNWelf,CN/584). In practice a district officer could refuse to apply for a social service benefit for a person if, for example, he thought that the man or woman in question would not be able to spend his benefit "responsibly". He could also take action to deprive someone of his benefit if, according to his judgment, a change in latter's circumstances occurred. A man in Carnarvon, for instance, lost his invalid pension when he left town for the bush, allegedly to go mining for Beryl. In spite of being away some 150 kilometers from the place where the man in question was mining, the district officer notified the Director of Social Services stating that: "It would be impossible to estimate exact earnings but it appears that at present he is making a living out of it" (DNWelf,W/27).

The position of a district officer was one of a middleman between the White society which tried to control the Aboriginal minority with minimal disturbance of the White way of life and the Aborigines who were gropingly trying to find their way in a definitely hostile environment. Even if he would feel sympathy for Aborigines a district officer would have to operate within the narrow margin of freedom White society allowed him. What's more, the Department of Native Affairs and later that of Native Welfare pursued a half-hearted policy which by no means was directed at increasing Aboriginal self-confidence and independence. Although this should be studied more closely, there are reasons to suspect that the district officers did not actively encourage Aborigines to use the social service benefits available to them. More likely, they only came into action when it was specifically asked of them and in the most glaring cases of want. The present reluctance of Ab-

original men to apply for unemployment benefit and their lack of routine in the procedures necessary for this may be illustrative of such a lack of guidance.

In 1972 the Department of Native Welfare was dissolved and many of its activities were taken over by the Department for Community Welfare (2). For many Aborigines the local field officers of this department continued to act as a liaison between them and the imperspicuous bureaucratic world of social security institutions. As appeared during my research, welfare officers continued the line of conduct of the former district officers of the Native Welfare Department and usually did not spontaneously initiate action to get financial support for destitute Aborigines but waited till they were explicitly asked for help. Whether or not this was part of a general policy and whether such a course of action, by forcing Aborigines to stand up for themselves, would ultimately be beneficial to Aborigines I must pass over here. A fact is that during my research I found people living in penury who on closer inspection appeared to be eligible for a social service benefit. Most frequently this concerned single people, particularly unemployed men whose poverty would be less conspicious as they could relatively easily be taken up in the household of relatives or friends. Yet, also people with dependent children missed out on social service, or, when they had applied for it, did not get the rations of food which they were entitled to while waiting for their first allowance to arrive.

Use by Aborigines of social security provisions and the role played in it by welfare officers is a complex matter. Undoubtedly it is heavily influenced by a past in which Aborigines were only considered fit to receive monetary assistance if they complied with certain standards of (White) behaviour. Also it must be viewed in the context of a tendency in Australian thinking to regard lack of success within the economic sphere as personal failure. Such influences seem to account for the fact that certain categories of Aborigines in Carnarvon have fewer chances of receiving spontaneous help from Welfare officers and, in a few cases, even meet with outright obstruction. Aboriginal unemployment, for instance, at the time of my research was insufficiently recognized as a structural phenomenon and this may partly explain why welfare officers made little efforts to encourage unemployed men to register for unemployment benefit. Also, in the light

of the above attitudes, it may be more understandable why particularly men and women who drank a lot, fought a lot, spent much time in jail (usually for offences relating to overuse of alcohol), led an irregular marriage life, or simply had a reputation for any of these kinds of behaviour, met with problems when registering for social services. Let me illustrate this with a case I myself have been closely involved in.

> A woman who had been deserted by her husband and was entitled to receive deserted wife's allowance had to fight for months to get what was due to her, simply because she was not supported by the Community Welfare officer. When I made enquiries into the progress of her case I was told that she drank and that she was not really in need. Eventually her application was turned down on absolutely incorrect grounds clearly prompted by the Carnarvon office of the Community Welfare Department. By then it had been discovered that the woman was in poor health and would be eligible for an invalid pension. Rather than challenging the incorrect decision of the Department of Social Services it was decided to apply for such a pension. Soon after the doctor who treated her had sent in the application forms he was rung by the welfare officer dealing with her case. In what could only be seen as a last minute attempt to obstruct her application the officer asked the doctor if he knew about Mrs. X's "private income", alluding to a fortnightly maintenance allowance paid to the woman and her children by her ex-husband. This amount, however, was so low that it could not possibly prevent the grant of a pension which, at long last she received.

Fortunately such cases of outright obstruction, to my knowledge, were rare, but this does not alter the fact that in a number of cases welfare officers acted arbitrarily and showed little willingness to assist people who had no one else to help them with their financial problems. What to think, for instance, of the officer who sent a destitute mother to the employment office telling her to register for unemployment benefit which, he should have known, she was not entitled to receive as she had no work record. Or the case of an unemployed man who was refused a ration of food at the Community Welfare Department because he did not have any dependents, while at the same time the woman he was living with had lost her deserted wife's allowance on the

ground of being supported by this very man.

Although, undeniably, some people were readily given assistance when applying for social service benefits, others met with severe problems. It would be difficult, with any certainty, to point out the motives behind the officers' behaviour, but judging by their own words, and particularly looking at the type of people that most frequently met with problems, it seems that a number of claimants for social service were regarded as having brought poverty on themselves by their irresponsible behaviour.

Maybe, some Aborigines did create an impression of being indifferent to a regular income, which was particularly troubling when they had a family to look after. Thus it happened that men on returning from their work on the sheep stations within a short time spent all the money they had earned on drinking parties with their mates. Then, remaining in town sometimes even for months they did not apply for unemployment benefit but seemed to trust that others would take care of their wife and children, a burden which usually rested on the shoulders of elderly people who had a regular income through an old age or invalid pension. It happened also that men just disappeared, leaving their wife and children behind without a cent; or that a mother squandered her social service benefit within a few days on drinking and gambling. Although such people were clearly a very small minority, possible prejudice on the part of welfare officers against recipients of relief may be fostered by behaviour like this, heavily infringing upon White economic morals.

Care should be taken not to put the onus of Aboriginal problems and poverty with individual officers of government welfare departments. Yet, it is realistic to assume that in the years to come welfare officers will continue to serve as a link between certain groups of Aborigines and White society. If government takes Aboriginal problems seriously it should provide for directives and create working conditions for its welfare officers as will enable them to serve Aboriginal interests to the best of their ability. One way of ensuring this purpose will be the appointment of a greater number of welfare officers of Aboriginal descent.

CHAPTER 6.

HOUSING OF ABORIGINES IN CARNARVON.

Corresponding with their peripheral position in Australian society the majority of Aborigines in Carnarvon live on the fringe of the town in very poorly constructed dwellings. The residential pattern of Aboriginal households has already briefly been treated and it was shown then that the place of residence of Aborigines has been strongly influenced by White policies. This also holds for the quality of dwellings occupied. Very few Aborigines can afford to purchase a house and the majority therefore are dependent on government housing schemes. Before turning to a discussion of the ideas and White interests behind Aboriginal housing policies and the Aborigines' preference for certain types of homes, I will first give some figures on the housing situation of Aborigines.

According to my survey of dwellings occupied by Aboriginal families 38 percent of them are of reasonable to good standards, having electricity and water laid on and most of them having bathrooms. The majority of these houses are owned by the West Australian State Housing Commission and are classified by it as "conventional homes". Before 1972, when the commission became responsible for Aboriginal housing, a number of these houses had already been built by the then Department of Native Welfare. Some conventional homes are company-owned and roughly only 10 percent of the conventional homes have Aboriginal owners. All these houses are situated in the major built-up area of the town and the people who occupy them have mostly been rather successful in terms of assimilation. As a rule conventional homes inhabited by Aborigines are not grouped together but are dispersed among the residences of Whites, a pattern that reflects the commission's philosophy of Aboriginal housing. Although conventional houses occupied by Aborigines are identical to those occupied by White working class people, they are often relatively poorly furnished and have fewer of the household amenities than are owned by the common Australian household. In some Aboriginal homes even the most common pieces of furniture like beds, cupboards and chairs are lacking.

Nearly two-thirds of the dwellings of Aboriginal families consist of what I call here substandard housing, that is, housing that fails to meet the generally accepted standards

of Australian homes. About one third of all substandard dwellings have specifically been built by the then Department of Native Welfare and at that time were called transitional houses. Such houses were built with the purpose of "training" Aborigines to make proper use of a house. Transitional houses were subdivided into two categories: "primary transitional" and "standard transitional", the latter category bearing closest resemblance to a conventional house. Primary transitional houses are found on the Reserve; they are built of unlined galvanized iron and have uncovered concrete floors. The houses have no water laid on, no toilet facilities and no power points. A few meters in front of each house there is a tap. The houses are very small having a central living area and one or two bedrooms. In the house is a woodstove but coocking is usually done outside on little open fires. Standard transitional houses have been built on the edge of the built-up area of the town, but as the town grew have increasingly become surrounded by houses of Whites. These housess have also been built of unlined galvanized iron, but some are made of asbestos sheets. They have water laid on, electricity, and toilet and laundry facilities; coocking is done on a woodstove in the combined kitchen-living room. Standard transitional houses are smaller than conventional houses.

All the other dwellings in the category which I call substandard consist of a motley collection of tents, broken down caravans or buses, corrugated iron shacks with dirt floors and various other makeshift structures. Of all the substandard dwellings, that is, including the transitional houses, 79 percent have no water laid on and 60 percent have no electricity. With the exception of the standard transitional houses none of the substandard dwellings have proper toilet or laundry facilities. Some people, particularly in camps in East Carnarvon, have to get their water from places as far as hundreds of meters away and generally, it should be clear, hygienic conditions are hard to maintain in the substandard dwellings. Furniture and equipment is usually limited to a minimum: beds, chairs, a table, sometimes a cupboard, almost invariably old and of very poor quality. Food is usually cooked on open fires and preserving tins and old Kerosene tins are used as cooking utensils. Crockery is limited to a few plates and cups of enamel or aluminium, cutlery is not used much as most people eat with their fingers. Very few households have a refrigerator which is not just awkward but uneconomical in

the hot Northwest climate. Storage of food in most dwellings of this type is virtually impossible and this probably contributes to a habit of Aborigines to buy small quantities of food at a time, a habit which necessitates frequent trips (often by taxi) to the shops which are relatively far away from the Reserve and East Carnarvon.

Although my survey showed that 38 percent of the Aboriginal houses are of reasonably good standard this does not mean that an equal proportion of Aborigines is adequately housed. The figures say nothing, for instance, about the people who have no home at all but camp out in the open, nor do they indicate the overcrowding which occurs. The number of people who live in proper housing conditions can be more accurately determined by considering the total number of conventional houses in relation to the total number of Aborigines living in the town.

According to figures given by the State Housing Commission 39 of their conventional houses are occupied by Aboriginal tenants. My own data furthermore indicate that another 10 houses inhabited by Aborigines are of good quality, some of these being company houses, other ones privately owned. In this total of 49 conventional houses some 300 people live, a figure which is arrived at by taking the average number of people in a commission house at 5.8 and of the private conventional houses at 7.3. (1). As the whole Aboriginal population of Carnarvon is approximately 1100, nearly three-quarters of them can be said to live in residences which do not meet the standards of housing enjoyed by the majority of whites.

Overcrowding of houses should also be taken into account. The average number of inmates per private house in Carnarvon as a whole is 4.2. (Abstract of Statistics, 1972). Against this the conventional houses occupied by Aborigines accomodate an average number of 6.1 , the sheds, huts, tents etc. 5.9, the primary transitional houses 7.2, and the standard transitional houses 10.2 inmates. These figures are careful estimates taking into account only more or less permanent residents and leaving out temporary inmates who, especially in slack periods of station employment, amount to considerable numbers.

The need for houses for Aborigines is also clearly shown by the waiting list of applicants for a commission home. Of the 120 families registered 63 percent are Aboriginal families. Bearing in mind that in Carnarvon Aborigines certainly do not overuse government facilities it seems war-

ranted to conclude that an even greater number of families is in need of decent houses. My survey data confirm this impression: of all the families that were inadequately housed and therefore would be eligible for a state house, 38 percent said they had never put in an application for this. Purely judging by the numbers of people that live in poor quality dwellings or have no house at all, at least another 138 houses for Aboriginal families are needed. In this calculation the average number of persons per house has been taken at 5.8 (1.6 more than the average figure for private houses as a whole) and homeless, single men have been left out of consideration.

Thus in the midst of the relative affluence of White Australians Aborigines have strikingly poor living conditions. Housing is just another illustration of the fact that Whites have uprooted the traditional way of life of Aborigines while, at the same time, effective participation of the last-mentioned in White society has not been earnestly encouraged by a progressive policy. When in the nineteen fifties the first hesitating attempts were made to actively stimulate Aboriginal assimilation, local government authorities were quick to thwart such efforts.

In the field of housing it was only since the late nineteen fifties that an active assimilation policy began to take shape. By the middle of 1955 in the whole State of Western Australia only thirty-two state houses were rented to Aborigines.(cf..Biskup, 1973:256). In 1959 the Department of Native Welfare commenced a housing scheme for Aborigines which included building the two types of transitional houses discussed above, but also provided for the construction of conventional houses (cf. Long, 1969:26). In the long run it was the intention of the department to place all Aboriginal families (in the settled areas) in such conventional houses within European residential areas. Aborigines should not live together in large groups as that would prevent them from taking example by the behaviour of White neighbours, or cause those who had become assimilated to fall back in old "objectionable" habits. But the assimilation policy, aiming at making Aborigines equal to Whites in their behaviour pattern, glaringly showed the vicious circle in which the former found themselves. They could only adopt the life style of the Whites, that is become assimilated, if they were allowed to fully take part in White society, yet, they were only allowed to participate if they

had adopted White beliefs, values and behaviour. Attempting to solve this predicament the department took up the construction of transitional houses. These would enable Aborigines to get accustomed to the lifestyle required of them so they would be "tolerable" to their prospective White neighbours when moving to a house of the conventional type.

Obviously this building program was necessitated by pressure from the Whites. Ever since the department began to assist Aborigines in acquiring adequate housing in White residential areas it had met with strong opposition from local authorities. When, for instance, in 1965 the department proposed to build two houses for Aborigines in Carnarvon, the town councillors expressed the view that the presence of Aboriginal houses adjacent to privately owned White residences would reduce the value of the latter. Clearly showing the interests it represented the Town Council decided on the following policy:

"a) integration of conventional State Housing Commission houses for natives in State rental housing areas be approved.

b) erection of any type native houses in privately developed areas or areas set aside for private development be strongly opposed" (2).

Thus the department's policy to intersperse houses for Aborigines among those occupied by Whites was only partly successful. The council thought that if houses for Aborigines should be built at all, they should preferably be built in one group. Still in 1973 a serious conflict arose between the State Housing Commission and the Carnarvon Shire Council over five houses the commission was building for Aboriginal tenants. The houses, according to the commission, "..complied with the model building and health bylaws and cost the same as State Housing Commission houses built for any one in the town. The only difference was that they had metal interior wall linings with paint finish. In some country areas the Commission would probably build similar houses for vigorous white families if it was possible that the walls would be damaged". Houses of this design were sometimes necessary said the general manager of the commission as "..we can't afford to be constantly replacing fibro and plaster board" (West Australian, 9-8-1973). The Shire Council, however, took the view that "..the metal walls on the houses indicated that the prospective tenants would not be suitable neighbours for other

members of the community (and also) the houses depressed the values of neighbouring properties" (ibid). Unless the commission guaranteed not to build more houses of this nature, the council refused to connect power and sewerage to the five houses that were already being built, and only by a decision of the Crown Law Department was made to change its stand.

Taking a brief look back at history, as done here with regard to housing policies, it is almost impossible to learn anything of the way Aborigines perceived the events that took place. All we see is the legal framework within which Aborigines were allowed to move and the attitudes and interest of White Australians that largely determined the policies. Of course, this tells a story in itself. Aboriginal views and preferences were not asked for, and if they were, the answers were not understood or simply put aside, unless they fitted the Whites' way of thinking. Thus, the policy of assimilation, although an improvement compared to the past in the sense of converging with the aspirations of certain groups of Aborigines, was still basically determined by White interests. It showed little understanding of the position of those who were still living according to Aboriginal traditions or were caught between this world and the culture of the Whites. The lesson of the past is, I think, that Aboriginal attitudes and aspirations have been grossly neglected and simplified and it may therefore be useful to amplify the figures on Aboriginal housing, as given above with an examination of the way Aborigines themselves look at their housing situation.

As is to be expected, satisfaction with housing conditions is greatest among the people living in conventional homes. 75 Percent of the heads of households of this group said to be content with the house they live in; 22 percent was dissatisfied; while 3 percent was undecided. Most people in the second category were unhappy with the size and the location of their house while lack of maintenance was also a source of complaints.

Considering the often extremely poor standard of their dwellings, a relatively high percentage of people living in substandard housing was satisfied with their dwellings. On the Reserve 61 percent of the heads of households said to be content; 35 percent was dissatisfied; and 4 percent was not sure. Of the people living in East Carnarvon 32 percent had no complaints about their house; 56 percent

was discontented, and 12 percent was unsure.

These figures seem to support the view that as Aboriginal people adopt more of the ways and habits of the Whites their discontent grows. Of course, within the group of town dwellers the proportion of satisfied people is higher than among those from the Reserve, but obviously this is also affected by the nature of dwellings provided. Comparing even the best of the dwellings on the Reserve with the poorest of the conventional homes, one cannot fail but to be surprised at the high level of satisfaction found on the Reserve. Secord and Backman (1964) have related the differential satisfaction of minority groups with their socio-economic situation to the concept of comparison level. The term refers to the level of reward or positive outcomes, that a person expects on the basis of his experience in previous relationships and interactions (cf Jones and Gerard, 1967:709). Comparison level, then, is the standard or reference point that a person uses to evaluate his outcomes of the moment. Where, according to Secord and Backman (1964: 415), "....the minority group has the same comparison level as the majority group, it is likely to be dissatisfied and hostile. But if its comparison level is sufficiently low relative to that of the majority group, no such feelings may be experienced." The concept of the reference group may also render service in explaining the attitudes involved here. Taking the reference group as a group which serves as a yardstick in evaluating one's social position, it may be said that the majority of Reserve people take their own group as a reference group. In considering their housing situation they tend to look more to their fellow Reserve dwellers than to Aborigines in town, leave alone to the Whites.

The above views are supported by the fact that 80 percent of the Reserve people living in transitional houses, which, comparatively speaking, offer the best accomodation there, were satisfied with their housing. Against this 83 percent of the people living in tents, shacks etc. complained about their accomodation. When asked about their wishes for a new house it appeared that the majority of these people did not want anything more than a transitional house. The picture presented here is complicated by the fact that many (80 percent) of the people who have no house at all, the majority of whom are single men or men who have deserted their family, contend that they are not unhappy with their living conditions. A comment given by one of them

illustrates the typical attitudes found in this group:

- I live everywhere. I sleep the same old way like the day I was born. They can't make us any better than we are. I'm happy how I am now... you can't growl about things. If you go to a state house you got to have a few bob (shillings D.). Now it don't cost us anything.

Another man said:

- A place is no good to me. I'm just a fellow that come and go. If I had a woman I might settle down, now I'm too bloody old getting married.

When in informal discussions I attempted to draw them by asking what they thought of the houses of the White people in town, I got answers like:

- If we see that White people have good houses whereas we haven't it doesn't mean nothing to us, we don't care.
- It doesn't worry me that Whites have more things than we. As long as a man has a place to camp...not worth to settle in a house when a man is single.

Of all the heads of households living in substandard dwellings 46 percent said to be contented with their housing, 46 percent were dissatisfied and 6 percent felt undecided. Such figures suggest that the subjectively felt need for conventional houses is not directly proportional to the number of people that, according to White standards, are inadequately housed. One should be careful, however, to call real satisfaction what, at a deeper level, may just be an aversion against the only alternative to substandard housing that is offered to Aborigines at present: conventional houses scattered amongst those of the Whites.

Many Aborigines recognized the aims of assimilation underlying the pattern of modern Aboriginal housing schemes and some explicitly agreed with it:

- Aborigines have to live next to White people, that gives them a sense of competition so they will make their house and garden look good. Of course, some people like to stay together but that's no good to them.
- If they spread all the people out over town there wouldn't be so much fight. If they'd live next to White people they'd get the police on them straight away.

But other people may dislike the social pressure to which they are, or would be, exposed in a neighbourhood dominated

by Whites. A young woman who had recently moved into a conventional home next to White neighbours said:

- I'm happy with this house, but only our neighbour...he's watching me all day...doesn't say anything to us, just sits down and stares at me...staring at me like I'm a monkey in a cage. I'm afraid to go outside, I stay inside all day...I'm afraid to let the kids run around the house, afraid to have my relations visiting us.

One may doubt whether the Aboriginal housing problem will be adequately solved by simply building conventional houses for Aborigines amidst European residential areas. Particularly on the Reserve I found heads of households who, when asked about this, said that they did not want to live in town among White families. Some could not give a specific reason for this but may just have felt fear for the unknown; others gave various reasons which mostly could be subsumed under a general attitude of apprehension to lose daily contact with other Aborigines, particularly with close relatives.

- I don't want to go to town. I want to take all my family with me and my dogs...I can't take all the dogs to a house in town.
- I would like to live where the old Jamadji people live and keep my grandchildren with me.
- I don't want to be separated from my children and grannies. We wants to stay together.
- I wouldn't like to live in town...better off here. In town you don't have many friends to visit, especially if you're alone without a husband. Here on the Reserve you got company.

Many of those who feel this way are elderly people. Their fear that extended families will have to be broken up when moving into a state house is well grounded as the commission is opposed to extended families living in its houses.

As was said in an earlier chapter, a close interconnection of people is found particularly on the Reserve. The Reserve group shows greatest cohesion, which, among other things, is closely connected with kinship, Aboriginal cultural traditions and a common background of working and living on the sheep stations. On the Reserve people live close together; they can always find someone to have a chat with, a company for playing cards, or drinking partners;

when they're hard up there's always a relative or friend of whom they can borrow some food, tobacco or anything else they may need. A similar style of life is found in East Carnarvon although here, maybe as part of a tendency towards greater individualization, the camps are usually further apart. The bonds of a common spiritual attachment to Aboriginal traditions are much weaker here and also people show a greater variety of social backgrounds.

This closeness of social life on the Reserve and East Carnarvon, which to some holds great attraction, at the same time to others is a cause for concern. Particularly excessive drinking (3) makes the physical and social closeness of life on the Reserve and in East Carnarvon a burden to these people. Such attitudes were revealed when, talking about their housing, people did not comment upon the quality of their dwelling, or put special stress on this aspect, but elaborated mainly on the fact that they would like to live away from other Aborigines, many of whom are seen as a threat to a quiet and peaceful life. Moving to a house in town sometimes is seen as a solution of the problem, but other people just want to shift camp to a place "far away from the crowd". In their comments some people explicitly referred to drinking behaviour, others pointed at general problems of disorganization of social life:

- We will be shifting from here (East Carnarvon D.)... go down to the river. It's nice and quiet and clean there. Too many drunkards come here and want food and bed. We can't have a rest for the night then, When it comes around pension day or pay day they wander around drunk looking for a bed.
- I'd like a house in town to get away from the drunkards.
- I wouldn't mind living in town...this Reserve mob should be split up, too much trouble, too many fights.
- We want a house on our own. Here there's always people that just walk into your camp and take things away. If you say something about it they say: "but I'm a relation", and then you can't say nothing.
- In town it's nice and clean, no one makes a noise.
- I would like to get a house away from everybody. Some people are really being pestered by relatives and friends... Aboriginal people are softhearted, can't turn one another away.
- It's good to have a nice place to live. It would make the

young people happy. If the people would have to leave the Reserve that would be good for the young children... the mothers look after them properly then...now the mothers don't care for the children well enough... playing card now, nothing to do...won't get up to cook food for the children. They'll be more interested when they have a house, now they sit down and gamble all the time.

- People with children they really want houses...that's the Whitefellas they got houses...they got children that go to school...they got to have a good place to go to school, keep the childrens in their place...you can't ..if they're living in the mission it's allright, but people should keep their own children. Well my daughter she got a house down the Reserve you know...well she's battling for a house and she got the eldest two girls over there... cause you can't have the girls on the Reserve, they're big girls, grown up big and she wants them to come right so she can keep them...she don't want to leave them in the mission, she wants them with her...but there's a lot of boys there...nowadays it's not like before...they got a lot of friends and they just wander away and get into trouble...there's a lot like that, that's why they go to the mission.

CHAPTER 7.

EDUCATION.

Educational background of Aboriginal adults.

In 1943 the Premier of Western Australia wrote to the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society of London: "...the interests of the native children are amply protected by the policy of the State Education Department. Exclusion for colour is not permitted and no discrimination can be endorsed against the attendance of coloured as 'coloured children'..."(DNA,546/42). Yet, in Carnarvon until 1961 the great majority of Aboriginal children went to the segregated school of the Church of Christ Mission which in the mid 1940's had been established with government support. Education of Aboriginal children in the district dates back to the thirties when the local convent school, run by nuns, and the state school took some (part-) Aboriginal pupils whose parents had come from districts south of the Gascoyne area and had settled at the edge of the town. Going to school must have been a plight for Aboriginal children as they were confronted with sharp prejudice and discrimination. In 1937 all Aboriginal children of the state school were expelled following complaints of White parents (Biskup,1973:191). Such action was possible on the grounds of a regulation of the Education Act stating that: "The attendance of any child who is suffering from any contagious, offensive or infectious disease, or who is habitually of uncleanly habits, may be temporarily suspended by the head teacher... Children who are natives within the meaning of the Native Administration Act may be excluded with the permission of the Department if parents of children who are not natives as aforesaid substantiate their objections to their attendance on the grounds herein before stated" (DNA,222/43). An informant who recalled this time said: "They (the Whites D.) stopped us from going to school because it was a bit racial...they reckoned we carried lice and all that...there was still a bit of it going on while I was at school. This is why the biggest majority of people those days didn't go to school and get a good education".

In the early forties new conflicts arose. When the headmaster of the state school experimented with integration of Aboriginal and White children by seating them next to each other, the parents of the last-mentioned withdrew their children from school and sent them to the convent school

where segregation was still practiced (Biskup, 1973:204). According to an informant, who attended the convent school in the forties,

- There was a colour bar on the school in those days. In the convent school the nuns locked us coloured kids up in a little room during playtime. When the White kids had had their break we were allowed to go outside.

One can easily imagine under what adverse conditions these children received their education. An informant illustrated something of the atmosphere of that time when relating two incidents he remembered from his own schooldays:

- One day the teacher asked the children whether they had seen any birds. I said 'yes, I saw Djilanbi (mudlark)'. She said 'what's that?'. No one knew what I meant and they all laughed at me talking the Aboriginal language. Another day kids took my dinner away from me. The teacher somehow got it and held it up, a piece of damper (bush-baked bread D.) and a piece of sausage. I wouldn't own up to it and went without it that day.

In the mid forties the Church of Christ established a mission some 10 miles out of Carnarvon and began to take care of the education of Aboriginal children. Although the Church of Christ, through the Department of Education, was supported by the State Government, local authorities in Carnarvon were not happy with its activities. The Town Council initially refused to sell building ground some 10 kilometers out of town to the mission and offered a site 60 kilometers from town instead. Eventually, however, the council gave in.

As said in a report of the district officer of the Department of Native Affairs, it were the "station children", whose parents were working out in the bush, who went to the mission school whereas "....the caste children could normally expect to be accomodated in the existing schools" (DNA, 76/54). Initially pupils of the mission school were brought in by police officers and later, after the establishment of a field organization of the Department of Native Affairs, by regional officers of that organization. According to reports they met with greater resistance on the part of the station owners, resenting interference with their Aboriginal workforce, than on the part of Aboriginal parents. Opposition of pastoralists seemed partly to reside in their fear that, once educated, young men and women would

no longer be willing to work in the pastoral industry and certainly not for under-award wages. When this proved to be false station owners complained that education at the mission did not prepare the children for work at the stations. It was claimed, the district officer of Native Welfare wrote: ".... that the girls are unable to launder, iron, cook, sew, or care for their accomodation, and the boys cannot ride, care for horses or harness, assist with windmill and vehicle repairs, or be relied upon to even muster without having to be closely supervised continually" (DNA, 132/54).

As for Aboriginal parents, no strong opposition against the removal of their children to the mission seems to have existed, although it should be borne in mind that all evidence from those days comes from reports written by White people. During the early years of the mission, policemen in their capacity of protectors of Aborigines took the children away but whether they used force is unknown. Yet, it seems unlikely that during these early years parents sent their children out of their own free will, but since they were so used to being told by the Whites what to do, they probably accepted the inevitable without complaint. A fact is that looking back at this period none of my informants expressed resentment about what had happened. The earliest reference to parental attitudes is found in a document of the mid fifties in which the district officer of the Native Welfare Department wrote: "Attitudes of parents to mission training is generally good. Parents contacted realised the great advantage of education, although the natural love of these people for their children could be seen in some hesistancy. The foremost question asked of me was 'Can we have them out for holidays?'" (ibid). This question apparently was stimulated by a reluctance on the part of the mission to let children occasionally go back to their own home environment. It was thought that mission influence would be weakened if children would not severe ties with their background as much as possible. Anyhow, whether parents could have their children with them during holidays according to the district officer "is a question which has been a source of worry in the Gascoyne sub district and must be answered with discretion .... the mission here, does not agree to elder girls being discharged from the mission because of the moral danger and ultimate pregnancy. Some parents of course, unfit to care for their children during holidays and I agree with ideas on the matter, but if parents are to refrain from sending their children to the mission for

this reason, the restriction may have to be lessened to some degree. However, the need is not there at the moment" (ibid).

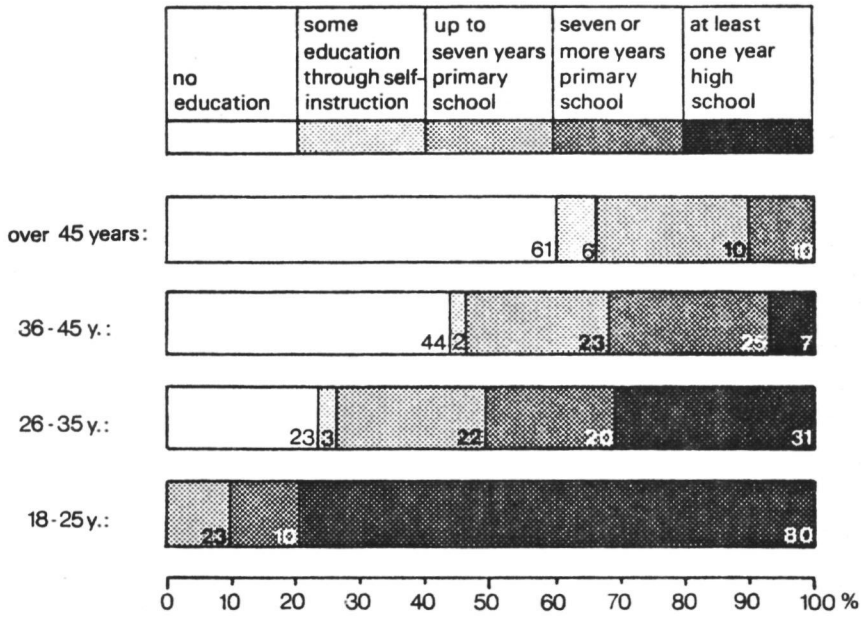
In 1961 the mission school was closed and its pupils were transferred to schools in town. The mission, however, continued to function as a hostel for Aboriginal school-age children and still does so today. In 1973 there were one hundred children accomodated in the mission. Nearly one quarter of them had been put in the mission by the Department for Community Welfare as they were under state guardianship for reasons of parental neglect or having committed crimunal offences. The rest of the children had been sent voluntarily by their parents; about half of them came from the Ashburton district where there is no high school, the others were from the Gascoyne district itself but lived in the mission because their parents or guardians were out in the bush working.

Thus, until the Carnarvon mission began to take care of Aboriginal education it were mainly the part-Aboriginal children who went to school. Some, whose parents lived at the edge of town, went to the state school in Carnarvon, others who grew up in the bush were taken away to the missions in the south of the state, like that at New Norcia or the "Swan Half-caste Mission" outside Perth, or to the government settlements at Moore River and Carrolup. Selection for these institutions was according to skin colour: children with a light skin were taken away, those with a dark complexion were left in the bush.

Of all the adults that were interviewed 39 percent have not had any school education, all of them older than 25 years. Nearly one quarter (21 percent) have been to primary school but never finished their education there. A great proportion of these people have not spent more than a few years at school, less than half of them actually attended school for more than three years. For almost all the people in this category school has been a marginal experience and all of them can be considered as practically illiterate; many do not even remember what grade they were in when they left school, some at the age of 13 or 14 years old had only come as far as grade 3 or 4. A small proportion of people (3 percent) said they learned to read and write by themselves or with the help of the station owners for whom their parents worked. 17 Percent of the respondents have finished primary school and a further 20 percent have been to high school. Nearly all of the latter

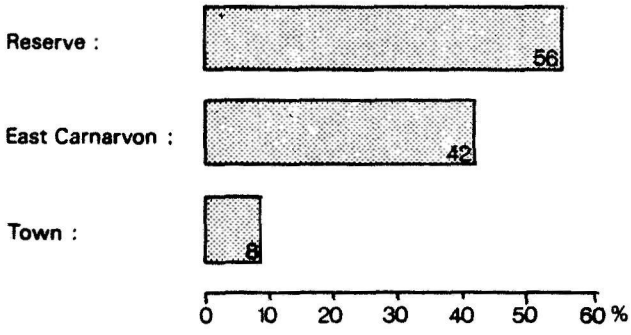
are younger than 30 years and usually they never got beyond first or second year (now also referred to as 8th or 9th year, following 7 years primary school education). Even in the last two categories one finds a fair proportion of people who are practically illiterate, some young adults who have attended high school can barely read. (See also figure 10).

Figure 10.
Educational achievement of adult Aborigines in Carnarvon (percentages given for each age category separately).



Split up according to residential group it is on the Reserve and in East Carnarvon that one finds the greatest proportion of people who have received no school education whatsoever, as is shown in figure 11.

Figure 11. (see next page).
Percentage of adults per residential group who have had no school education.



Only one third (34 percent) of the adults who have been to school received their education, or part of it, in Carnarvon and most of these (76 percent) have lived in the mission during their schooltime. The great majority of people who have been educated elsewhere, moreover, have not been born in the Gascoyne district, which emphasizes the fact that a large proportion of members of the Aboriginal community who can be considered relatively well assimilated, have migrated to the town from other districts of the State.

Overall, then, the educational level of adult Aborigines is low, 36 percent of them being illiterate. In evaluating the school performance of Aboriginal children today, this is a factor which should be taken into account. Not only does it indicate to what extent Aboriginal parents are familiar with school matters and the problems facing their children there, it may also be an important determinant of the value that adults attach to formal education.

On the surface there is a general positive attitude towards school education. Discussing the subject, some people explicitly stressed the importance of education for the future of the children and through this of the Aboriginal community as a whole. A man, for instance, said:

- These young kids get better opportunities than we had and I'd wish to Christ they'd take them. If you don't have had education you don't know much. Therefore, I think Coloured people should go to school and learn something, that will help all the people.

A young man said that it was foolish of him to leave school:

- I feel that I should have kept going and study something that would really make me outstanding for my own people... studying...like the owner of a big property or boss of

a big company.

Others, however, have second thoughts about the benefits of schooling. Not only do they feel that their own school experience, if they have had any, has hardly any function in their lives, the advantages of school education for the young is also not clear to them. The hesitation of these people may be illustrated by the words of one of the leading old men of the community who once said to me:

- We must learn the young people. Frome here on they may go to university or something. I don't know whether it's doing any good for us. You can see for yourself that education hasn't done much good for them. Maybe if they get some higher education, like you, you went to higher education, you know what to do without anybody telling you. We didn't get any further, so we're stuck, we don't know what to do.

For a great number of people I think school has neither positive nor negative connotations. To them school is one of the inevitable external influences on Aboriginal life, something which White people are very concerned about, but which clearly does not belong to their own world of thinking.

Asking them whether they had been to school or not, some people spontaneously expressed regret at having missed out, or having left school too early, others just explained why they didn't go in a very matter-of-fact manner, or didn't explain anything at all. Some illustrations of the answers I got are given below:

- I never had the chance to go to school...always had to work. The boss of the station where I grew up said that school didn't teach children anything.
- No, I grew up in the bush with my parents.
- I never went to school, I wish to Christ I did...but it's too late now. My mother didn't want to put me to school. We never worried about town those days.
- I got as far as grade 4. When I was 14 I had to leave school because there was no high school in Carnarvon. In those days you had to have a lot of money if you wanted to send your kids to school.
- (I went to school for a) very short time...too many in my family. They couldn't school the lot of us. My father couldn't afford to keep us all going, so some of us

went back to Moore River...but there they tried you to go out to work as much as possible, to keep the mission going.
- Didn't have the chance to go to school, no mission in Carnarvon those days.
- Only half-caste children were picked up to go to the Moore River settlement...I didn't go there because I'm a full blood.
- They had a mission in Mogumber (Moore River settlement), but I didn't have the chance to go there. I was working when they came to pick me up. I was riding racehorses for a policeman when they came for me from Mogumber and the policeman said: 'G. is allright he is working for me'. But he left me then and I had to battle on my own. I would have liked to go to Mogumber. I would be a station manager now then, wouldn't be where I am now.
- Only went to school very short time. Those days you only got 25 bob a week. The old man couldn't feed us while we had to stay behind in town to go to school.

It was remarkable that many of the people who went to school in the missions in the south or in the government settlements were highly critical of the education they got there:

- I don't know what grade I had reached when I left school. They just learned us nothing, they made us wash clothes for the college's White boys.
- In the settlement we got very little education, they sent you out to work; to slave you.
- I went to school in this mission. We didn't get much education, we had to do the washing and ironing for the college boys.
- (In Mogumber) the working girls ran away often and then they took us, the older girls, from school to do the work, we cried in the beginning but nothing we could do.
- I only went to school 3 or 4 years. I was 11 when I went to school and left when I was 15. Those days people didn't care about this schooling for kids. I spent more time in the mission working than schooling, so I told them if I couldn't spend more time at school I might as well go.

Contrasting with this were the opinions of some people who expressed great contentment with the education they got in these institutions, all of whom, it should come as no surprise, considered themselves to be rather successful

in socioeconomic terms as compared with other Aborigines.

- I grew up in the mission along the Swan, I left it when I was 16, had finished primary school then. I was quite contented and was well educated, had a happy childhood, had the world in front of me. Even if I had been put in a state school I couldn't have done any better than at the mission.
- They should help the missions more than they do now. The missions have taught the kids a lot. They say that the missionaries held the children back but that's not true. Already in 1943 the nuns said to us" 'Don't let your colour stop you, no matter what colour your skin is, you can do anything you want'.
- I was taken away from my parents when I was very young and sent to an orphanage. Now they have schools and colleges but in those days they had orphanages. Some people have got a lot of resentment about that. This is why a lot of these Coloured people do resent the European, because they maintain it was the European that took them away from their family, but with me it's different. I hold no resentment against anyone. There must have been a reason for it. And even to this day I maintain that I was better off going there because if it wasn't for that, what sort of education would I have had? I'd probably just gone to the ordinary bush school...therefore it was a big advantage to me and I appreciate it now because I realize what education can do for you.

Asking them whether they had been to school or not, and if so what grade they had reached, revealed the attitudes towards education of a number of respondents by the spontaneous comments added to their answer. Others, however, merely said that they never went to school or just mentioned the grade they had reached. Of such respondents further questions were asked to find out how they felt about their own education or lack of it. Analysis of the answers showed that 48 percent of the respondents did not feel any regret at having no or little school education, or were generally content with the level of education they had reached. 46 percent were of a contrary opinion, that is, they felt that they had had insufficient schooling; 6 percent were undecided or could not answer the question. Split up according to residential group the attitudes expressed are shown in table 14 .

Table 14.
Percentage of people per residential group who are satisfied/dissatisfied with the level of school education they have reached.

	satisfied	dissatisfied	undecided
Reserve	61	31	8
East Carnarvon	47	41	12
Town	45	52	3

The present situation of Aboriginal education.

Since the early sixties in Carnarvon all school facilities are equally available to White and Aboriginal children. School attendance is compulsory for all children from the beginning of the year in which they turn six to the end of the year in which they become fifteen.

In 1973 Carnarvon had two kindergartens, two state primary schools, one primary school run by Roman Catholic nuns (the convent school) and a state high school with a five year course. One of the kindergartens had been build especially to offer pre-school experience to Aboriginal children and is attended by children from the Reserve and East Carnarvon mainly. The other kindergarten situated closer to town is visited by both White and Aboriginal children, the last-mentioned coming mainly from the town group.

Of the two state primary schools one is situated in the centre of the town, while the other is in East Carnarvon. Attendance of either one of the two state schools is according to location of residence for which purpose the town is divided into two districts. The town school had 120 Aboriginal pupils (on a total of 550) who came from the conventional houses in the main built-up area of the town and from the mission. The East Carnarvon school was attended by 100 Aboriginal children (on a total of 430), the majority of whom lived on the Reserve and in the camps and transitional houses of East Carnarvon; a few children were from conventional houses which are scattered through East Carnarvon. Very few Aboriginal children attended the Catholic convent school; although exact figures are not in my possession, their number would certainly not exceed 15. The high school had 85 pupils of Aboriginal descent (on a total of 456) coming from all residential areas of town.

Judging purely by numbers it is obvious that Aboriginal education has come a long way since the days that only a

handful of Aboriginal pupils were tolerated at the school. As a matter of fact, education in Carnarvon seems to be the only field in which something more is offered to Aborigines than just a theoretical equality. Aboriginal children have extra facilities for their education like the special kindergarten built with support of the State Department of Education, exemption from paying kindergarten fees and transport facilities to take the children there. In addition, Aboriginal pupils at high school receive a Commonwealth allowance of 250 dollars a year towards living expenses, a clothing allowance and are also exempted from paying fees for books.

Now, provided it is assimilation that Aborigines want, such assistance is well worthwile. No other group has been subjected to such deprivation in the educational field and all possible measures are justified to Reserve this, even some positive discrimination. However, apart from the fact that the assistance provided is still insufficient, being mainly financial, it is also clear that improvements purely in the field of education are still largely nullified by a multitude of other aspects adversely affecting the success of Aboriginal children at school. More about this later.

The financial assistance of Aboriginal schoolchildren is a cause for envy and criticism on the part of the Whites. Talking to them, or interviewing them quite a few Whites spontaneously expressed a grievance about it. Some Aborigines, particularly those of the town group, are aware of these objections and it appeared that some of them were embarassed about this what they considered to be preferential and felt that there was a lot of truth in the criticism. Thus, a woman explained:

- Properly speaking Aboriginal people are better off than many Whites. The woman that I work with has to pay 76 dollars for books for her children. She has also been battling all her life, just like me.

And a man said:

- My kids, who actually have very little Aboriginal blood in them get money to go to high school. Now, my neighbour who's a White man only makes 80 bucks a week and he's got to pay everything for his children's education himself. I don't think that's right.

As said, it are mainly the well assimilated people living

in the town who are faced with this dilemma and their attitudes in this reveal something of their social position, both within the Aboriginal group and vis-à-vis the Whites. From a comparative point of view these people are socially successful having the same type of jobs as working class Whites, living in the same type of houses and having a comparable income. Moreover, unlike the people of the Reserve and East Carnarvon, having more direct contacts with Whites, for instance as workmates or as neighbours, people of this group may subjectively be under pressure not to distinguish themselves from these Whites and may even feel solidarity with them. From this point of view the Commonwealth grant for high school children and other assistance provided may be seen as one of the symbols which still sets them apart, a fact which could explain why some parents have actually refused to be assisted in this manner and prefer to pay for the education of their children themselves. Very few, however, have done so; in 1973 on a total of 85 Aboriginal high school pupils 3 were not receiving the Commonwealth grant because their parents didn't want it.

It is my assumption that many of those who are eligible for financial support have no scruples about accepting it because, unlike the people mentioned above, they do not compare themselves with the Whites, a fact which will be discussed at greater length in a next chapter. Then, of course, there is a third category of people who do compare themselves with the Whites, yet, do not tend towards feelings of solidarity with them. On the contrary, they scorn the Whites whom they hold responsible for the deprivations suffered by members of the Aboriginal community. This attitude was clearly expressed by a woman who remarked:

- Some people say'I need no help from the government to send my children to school'. But then I say why shouldn't you take it; they have robbed us from everything. Let them give us back something now.

Performance of Aboriginal children at school.

In Carnarvon the great majority of Aboriginal children are still relatively unsuccessful at school. Teachers who were interviewed at the primary school and high school were unanimous in their opinion that Aboriginal children on the average do not achieve the same standard of education as the White children. At the primary schools where in the first two years children are promoted according to achieve-

ment it are mainly Aboriginal children who fail to pass and lose time. After first and second grade at these schools pupils are promoted chronologically, that is, they automatically go to the next grade according to age, but are enabled to catch up on subjects they have failed to master in previous grades. This system is called cross-grading and the so-called remedial groups involved in it function from 4th grade onwards. A majority of children in these remedial groups are Aboriginal and some of them haven't even mastered basic skills as reading and writing.

Of course, there are also Aboriginal children who do quite well at primary school. The principal of one of the primary schools, for instance, said: "We also have Aboriginal children that are right up the top". Such children, however, are a small minority who, even if they have the ability to be successful, usually do not perform according to their capacity. The lack of success of Aboriginal children at school is most clearly shown by their performance at high school where Aboriginal children, without hardly one exception, end their formal education. Besides, relatively few children continue at high school beyond the years of compulsory attendance, as is shown in table 15.

Table 15.
Numbers of Aboriginal and White children at Carnarvon high school.

		year 8	year 9	year 10	year 11	year 12
Aboriginal students	1973	41	29	13	4	1
Aboriginal students	1975	37	34	21	9	0
White students	1975	78	83	71	46	20

As this table shows there is a significant difference between the percentages of Aboriginal children and that of White children who stay at school beyond year 10, the year in which most students reach the age at which school attendance is no longer compulsory. In 1975 only 9 percent of the total number of Aboriginal children attending high school were in the two highest years of high school (all of them actually in year 11) against 22 percent of White children. Practically no Aboriginal children have ever reached leaving certificate or matriculation level at high

school.

Of the 101 Aboriginal children at high school in 1975 37 percent were not following what was usually referred to as "normal" or "mainstream education", but had been placed in the so-called "project stream", or "project class". Children who are placed in this group, according to the principal of the high school: "are unable to manage the barest fundamentals of the normal stream", some of them even being up to seven years retarted in reading age. All children in project classes are Aboriginal even though in principle the school is allowed (by the Commonwealth Education Department) to have 20 percent of White children in these classes. But none of the White children at Carnarvon high school, according to the teaching staff, are so disadvantaged educationally that they need to be placed in a project class. In fact, besides project classes there were two remedial classes in year 9 and 10 which provided for the education of both White and Aboriginal pupils who basically could cope with the normal stream but at a slower rate than the average student.

In project classes education is largely based on practical exercises like woodwork, metalwork etc. Boys, for instance, learn how to fit a tap, put in a concrete floor, lay out a lawn, put a hinge on a door. Girls learn to cook, clean a house, do shopping. As for more purely intellectual tasks such as reading, writing, mathematics, children work at their own individual level. Principally, according to a project class teacher, "it is teaching them how to read, write and do sums .... money maths mainly so they know how to handle money and so on". Children in the project classes are from all three residential groups in Carnarvon and also from the mission. None of these groups, however, appear to be overrepresented in the project classes.

When asked about this, teachers unanimously stressed that to the Aboriginal children no stigma seems be attached to being placed in the projects class. As a teacher said: "When we first started up the (project D.) classes, we didn't want it to be a stigma to be in the classes....we were conscious of that and we found now that kids are fighting to get into project classes....there is no stigma at all....in fact, you've had a win if you can get into the classes and lots of kids we have to knock back and say: "look you can't because you can cope in the other classes if you really try.. ..you're just being lazy....". At the Church of Christ Mission people said that the project classes were attractive

for the kids who were usually not to keen on the common school tasks and some children were suspected to neglect their work in order to be admitted to project classes. Corresponding with this, figures for absenteeism in the project classes are much lower than those for (Aboriginal) children who follow the main stream, and, in fact, the project classes were set up to fight absenteeism. That there is no stigma attached to the project classes may indicate that Aboriginal children generally are not under great pressure to be successful at school. This also partly explains why even Aboriginal children who score high on intelligence tests do not have matching results at school. In the mainstream course where, depending on their achievement, pupils are rated into advanced, intermediate and basic level, Aboriginal children usually perform at a basic level while very few of them work at the advanced level. Of the few children who are in advanced groups teachers said that they were not really performing according to their capacity. The generally poor showing of Aboriginal children in the mainstream is, furthermore illustrated by the fact that none of the children who are in year 11, which for Aboriginal children is exceptional anyway, are in the so-called academic year, but are following courses in commercial or technical vocational training leading to clerical work or a trade. Getting a leaving certificate or matriculation, giving access to higher professional training, still appears to be out of reach of these children.

The function of school education for Aboriginal children.

Schools are supposed to have an important function in adapting children to the society they grow up in, and in the case of Aboriginal children to serve as an acculturative agent. I will not deal with this broad aspect of school education here, but will examine its function in Aborigines' working careers.

It was shown earlier that the great majority of adult workers have unskilled or semiskilled jobs that require no formal training and this, in fact, still holds for the younger generation as well. In order to get insight into this I have tried to find out what had happened to Aboriginal children who had left the high school in the three years prior to my research.

Of 88 children who had left high school during these years I examined a sample of 44 children (22 boys and 22

girls). A number of them (11) had left Carnarvon to continue their education elsewhere. Some of these children had moved to another town together with their family, others, who were state wards, had been sent to institutions in the south. Six of these were girls which leaves 16 girls who had completed their education. Thirteen of the girls had reached third (or 10th) year and two of the girls had done an extra course on a business college in Perth. At the time of my investigation twelve of the girls were unemployed, including the two girls who had been to business college; five of these unemployed girls had never done any work since leaving school, which for all of the children in my sample occurred at least 7 months ago. Seven of the girls had one or more children. Of the four who worked, two had jobs as domestics on sheep stations, one was shop assistant and one did clerical work. Employment for most of the girls was of unskilled nature and usually of short duration and seemed to play an unimportant role in their life, completely in conformity with the employment pattern of adult women. Only one of the girls that I interviewed spontaneously expressed some concern about the difficulties of finding work. She had been to business college for nine months and on returning to Carnarvon had spent six months looking for a job. All that she could find, according to her saying, was a job as a processor at the local prawning factory which she thought was "a rotten job" and consequently had quit after some days. Then she had followed a short training course for nursing aide in Perth and at the time of my interview she had been back in town since 5 months, during which period she had not worked at all and, in fact, had not even tried to find work. "I don't want to work in Carnarvon now", she said, "....at Christmas time I'm gonna travel up north with a girlfriend; this town is too small and dead. When I came back from business college I tried to get a job here for 6 months but never found anything. Now I'm not gonna try again".

Of the twenty-two boys in the sample five were continuing their education in institutions in the south. One boy had left for Perth but nobody knew of his whereabouts. Of the remaining 16 boys that had left high school, five of whom had completed third year, nine at the time of my interview were unemployed. Unlike the girls, however, all of these sixteen boys had had a job at one time or another. None of them had been in steady employment since leaving school; they had worked in temporary rural jobs usually on sheep stations but sometimes also as a labourer for the

Department of Main Roads or for a fencing contractor. When I interviewed them only one boy worked in town as unskilled labourer for the town council in an unemployment relief scheme. One worked as a fisherman in Shark Bay, the others, if not unemployed at that time, were on sheep stations.

Undoubtedly the high degree of unemployment among these boys is due to a lack of opportunities. Even though Carnarvon compares favourably with other outback towns, its economic structure does not show enough variation and growth to offer employment to all children leaving school. Such limitations apply to Whites as well but White parents anticipate on these problems and often leave Carnarvon before their children are ready to leave school so as not to hinder their further education or chances of finding a suitable job.

Still, the few opportunities of learning a trade through an apprenticeship that exist are almost exclusively taken up by White children. According to manual arts teachers involved in apprenticeship programs: of the 40 apprenticeships held in Carnarvon in 1975 none was filled by an Aboriginal boy. "You see", one of the teachers said "... generally it's going to be difficult for a lot of kids when they leave school, White or Black. When it comes to hard facts, a lot of the employers in town have never employed a native apprentice....possibly none of the native kids never fronted up for an apprenticeship, they don't think they need one and so the White boys hops in there and he gets the job". Indeed, during my research I never came across an Aboriginal boy serving an apprenticeship to become a tradesman. A few boys, however, said they had a job like that at one stage, but gave it up. One of them said:

- I worked as an apprentice mechanic but I never finished it. I wasn't too good at studying the books you know so I quit and went goat chasing.

Another boy, as his mother said, had an apprenticeship as a car mechanic but never got to do any mechanical work. "All they made him do was washing cars all day long".

Thus, Aboriginal boys hardly ever apply for an apprenticeship and if they do it almost invariably ends up in failure. Perhaps to the few who try, the strict working scheme and study involved in vocational training may seem too much like a continuation of school which they are only

too happy to leave behind them. A young man, in his early twenties, once remarked:

- I think the Coloured boys don't like apprenticeships they just want to go for more fun, chasing girls, drinking. These kids who got an education at Mogumber (farming school D.) when they come to Carnarvon they don't do nothing just chasing fun; they just let their life go away. I know, because I've been like that myself, mucked up two apprenticeships myself.

For most boys learning a trade, however, is something which they do not even think about, something which obviously does not belong to their world. Writing essays about what they would do after leaving high school, most of the Aboriginal boys in year 9 showed very low career aspirations. The majority said they would like to go bush, work on a sheep station or do some other type of unskilled work, like that in a road gang. Very few expressed a wish to be trained as a tradesman; no one mentioned a profession like doctor, lawyer, teacher etc. In conformity with this pattern I found very little evidence of frustrated job aspirations among boys who had left school and this strongly resembles the attitudes of adults.

In order to illustrate something of the life boys lead after leaving school and the place they take in the job structure, this section will be concluded with some brief case histories.

J., not quite 17 years old, lives on the Reserve. His father died when he was twelve and his mother doesn't have a new husband. When he attended school J. lived in the mission where he spent a considerable time of his youth. He doesn't say much about his life there and when asked about it tells me that it was allright. Nevertheless, J. ended his school career half-way year 9 at high school when he ran away from the mission and was caught joyriding with a mate on their way north where J.'s mother lived at that time. As it was his first offence he got away with a warning. J. didn't go back to the mission and his mother, according to his saying, didn't mind him staying with her. When his mother got a job on a station as a domestic J. accompanied her and he did odd jobs on the station which he wasn't paid for. After a few weeks J. missed his mates and went back to town where he teamed up with two other boys to go out for mustering sheep, a job which lasted

five weeks. Having spent a few weeks in town J. was asked by a Community Welfare officer to go to another station where he worked for 9 months after which period he was dismissed because, as he says, "the job cut out". By this time, however, J. has become critical of station work: "You get too lonely out at the station. I lived in this hut all by myself, no one else around. It would be allright there if you had a mate to talk to". J. then tried to get a job at the salt mine but was unsuccessful: "they only wanted engineers". So back he goes to a station where after two weeks he is thrown off a horse and has to go back to town for doctor's treatment. When I interview him he has been in town for three weeks and hasn't had any income since then. J. doesn't get sickness benefit, which he is entitled to. "I never heard about that, don't really know what it is. I never put in for it anyway. I tried to get unemployment benefit but .... I had to fill in these forms .... wasn't too good at it so I gave it away". J. lives in an old tent together with four other boys, three of whom are relatives. All of them have been unemployed for more than four weeks and none of them gets unemployment benefit. They get an occasional meal of the woman (a distant relative of J.) next to whose little house they have put up their tent. The woman herself has no income, apart from that earned by doing a few odd (domestic) jobs, but is supported by her son in law and daughter.

S., 16 years old, lives in East Carnarvon. His parents work on a sheep station and only come to town for holidays. S. lives in a camp which is characteristic for that area: a couple of corrugated iron shacks, an old caravan, occasionally a tent or makeshift structure set up by people returning from a station or visiting Carnarvon from another part of the state. In the camp live S.'s grandparents on mother's side, his married brothers and an ever fluctuating number of single young men, friends and relatives of the family. While going to school S. lived in the mission. He left school because he could get a job on a station. He was only just in year 10 then, but was "sick of school" and, besides, "wasn't much good at it either". Even though S. says that he never regretted leaving school, he adds that it was not really the school he was fed up with but the mission. "I didn't like the way it was run....too many rules, you can't do this, can't do that....we couldn't go to town in the evening to the pictures. I think they was too religious, every time

you were in the wrong they brought the bible up. I think in a way I would have liked it, if only they could forget about that bible". S. got himself a job on a sheep station through his relatives but only stayed on for a few weeks. He left the job because, as he said, he wanted some adventure; so he travelled up north with some friends. In one of the towns there he got a job for the Shire working on the roads and after some months went back to Carnarvon. At the time of my interview S. has been unemployed for more than three months, but hasn't put in for unemployment benefit: "I haven't thought of it". S. is supported by his relatives while he doesn't have an income.

A., 17 years old, lives with his parents in a conventional house. His father works as a labourer in town for one of the government departments. A. has left school after 2nd year. He wasn't much good at school, according to his saying, and was not interested in it either. While at school A. frequently got into trouble not only with the teachers, because of truancy, but also with the police for stealing and joyriding. A.'s mother blames this on bad company: "All his friends are from broken houses. Many of these kids drink, I know my son does too, but we can't stop him, how could we?". On leaving school A.'s father got him a job as a labourer with a firm in town but that lasted only three months. A. got into trouble with the law again and was sent to a home by the Community Wefare Department. On release he stayed in Perth for a while with different Aboriginal families and worked occasionally as a casual labourer. When he returned to Carnarvon A.'s mother told him to register for unemployment benefit ("I told him: everyone gets it so why not try") and soon after doing that was given a job by the employment agency as a labourer for the town council, working in an unemployment relief scheme.

Impediments to the success of Aboriginal children at school.

In his review of the culture of poverty concept Valentine (1968:28) criticizes studies of poor American Blacks "in which the major part of the cause for educational underachievement is unhesitatingly ascribed to the home and family and community". In the discussion of the lack of success of Aboriginal children at school, home background, indeed, presents itself as one of the major factors involved, but obviously this should not be seen as an independent variable.

The historical process and present structure of Aboriginal-White relations have severely disturbed the continuity of Aboriginal culture and have brought Aborigines in a subordinate political and economic position. All this has left its marks on Aboriginal home and community life. Schooling of Aboriginal children, now, has been put forward as an instrument to abolish their social inequality, but fails to do so precisely because school education helps to continue the very structures that are at the root of Aborigines' low status. The norms and values prevailing at school are not concordant with the behaviour pattern that Aboriginal children develop at home. This was very aptly expressed by the principal of Carnarvon high school who said: "....you 've got to recognize the fact that we judge our students by middle class criteria. The successful student in our school is one who is White, Anglo-Saxon, middle class, competitive, ...his parents are successful..... these are the values of the school....the school system as a whole. For better or for worse they are the standards of all schools because the schools tend to be dominated by this part of the community. Now, talking about academic achievement the Aboriginal children come from a completely different background, their values are obviously different ....they are surely disadvantaged in terms of fittimg into a community like the one I have described and they really come into school with academic performance unequal to the middle class White type of child....not only that but battling to hold their own".

Generally, when an Aboriginal child goes to school he does not get the same backing from his parents as many White children. Certainly, parents express to be aware of the importance that Whites attach to education and they are willing to adopt this point of view. Yet, such ideas are probably not as ingrained as among the Whites. To many Aborigines thay are clearly "foreign" and are not really part of their way of looking at things. Some people were obviously ambiguous in their attitude. At one time they would stress the importance of education for children, at other times they expressed doubts as to its usefulness; after all, what good had education done to the young? A woman whom I interviewed thought that it would be important for children to go to school. Yet, when asked what she did when her children did not feel like going to school she said: "I keep them home, send a note next day.... they don't miss much I think".

It seldom happens that parents visit school to discuss educational progress of their children, nor are they in any way involved in "Parents and Citizens" organizations which assist schools in organizing extra-curricular activities. Schoolteachers complained that it was so difficult to get Aboriginal parents to come to school, but just how hard they tried I do not know. Lack of parental involvement, naturally, is just another consequence of discrimination, particularly in the past, and the peripheral place of Aborigines in White society. It is also related to the fact that many parents have not had school education themselves and are fully ignorant about what goes on at school and about the problems which children may face there. Sometimes this lack of understanding is really great. One day, for instance, when I was visiting a woman on the Reserve she handed me the reports of her two foster children saying: "...it looks as though they are doing allright isn't it?" She had never been to school herself and could not make out what was in the reports, for they were both very poor with marks ranging from 'below average' to 'well below average' and with comments added by the teacher saying that the children showed no interest in their schoolwork, were lazy, and frequently missed school. On another occasion I was present when a small boy came home with a book under his arm. This book, I knew, was given to children to practice their reading, but as the boy put it on the kitchen table his mother scolded him and shouted: "Don't cart that bloody book up and down all the time, just leave it in your desk. I told you so many times before". The little boy didn't say anything and probably had never before explained to her why he brought this book home; he just looked blank, turned around, grabbed an old pair of high heeled ladies shoes put them on and tottered out into the sun again singing out to his friends to come and play with him.

There still is a world of difference between the environment of an Aboriginal child's home and that of the school. Both the physical and spiritual climate of many Aboriginal homes do not stimulate the intellectual capacities which are required of the child at school. In a lot of dwellings there is no electricity, no tables and chairs to sit down at and read, write or draw and generally they lack the tranquillity and privacy necessary for this type of intellectual work. Besides, adults do not normally engage in such activities themselves. Most

adults never read books apart from comics. The way adults spend their leisure time varies according to the residential group they belong to, but as with other behavioural characteristics there are no clear-cut distinctions between the groups. Drinking, playing cards and gambling are popular pastime activities, but particularly so at the Reserve and East Carnarvon.

A striking thing in many Aboriginal homes is the lack of verbal communication between adults and children themselves. Parents do not discuss things with their children, do not ask them about their daily experiences or explain things to them. After a few months of fieldwork I was surprised by the behaviour of an old man who held conversations with his youngest son and grandchildren, showing them things in the bush and explaining how he used to work there, what kind of work he did and how things were organized those days. Some of the characteristics noted here about the Aboriginal home are also found in a Maori community where "....the child is exposed to a very poor standard of both Maori and English in the home. Books and magazins are seldom available, comics constituting the chief literary fare of most Maori children. Their parents do not ordinarily read to them or tell them stories, and conversation between parents tends to be minimal even at the dinner table" (Ausubel, 1961:92).

Although there is a diversity of life styles among Aboriginal families, many Aboriginal children grow up less protected than their White contemporaries. As said before, marriage relations are rather unstable; alcoholism, fighting and imprisonment of adults is a regular occurrence in certain households, mostly so on the Reserve and in East Carnarvon. Children grow up within a wider group than that of their own nuclear or extended family and although this may have certain advantages for the child, in this case it also means that he is subjected to a very lenient social control. In many families I could barely discern any rules relating to children's behaviour. Little toddlers are usually watched rather closely by parents, older brothers or sisters or others who see to it that they do not harm themselves. As soon as a child can walk well it has almost complete freedom. Children are not told to go to bed or called for meals at regular times; they can dirty themselves as they please; they can go wherever they want. Talking about parents and children, a young Aboriginal woman said to me:

- You see, a lot of these mothers play cards and don't look to their children. They drink and leave their kids home and the kids go out and roam about the streets. If the Coloured children had strict parents, like some of the White people, well, I think they would get on well, but they haven't. The mothers let them do what they like. You might as well say: the little ones, the four or five year olds are boss to the grown-ups, they do everything their own way. That's what these people of the Guda Club should do: make mothers look after their children.

Primary school teachers said that Aboriginal children, when they come to school for the first time, are totally undisciplined and that it takes them half a year sometimes to teach these children to do something at regular hours and to keep working on a task they themselves have grown tired of.

Absenteeism at school probably is related to a lack of adult control of children. According to teachers Aboriginal children missed school much more frequently than White ones, although there was a difference in this between the children who lived in conventional homes in town and those of the other two groups. In an unpublished survey report about absenteeism among Aboriginal children on the East Carnarvon primary school (Schoch, n.d.:7), it was said that: "arrangement of the family groups into those with 'less than 20' half day absences per term and those with terms 'exceeding 20' half day absences, revealed that the 'less than 20' group all lived in conventional homes, i.e. homes typical of the Carnarvon town area and serviced with electricity, hot water systems and sewerage". Taken over a period of two years children from the town group, it was shown by this survey, had a mean absence of 4 days per term against 15½ days per term for the Reserve and East Carnarvon children. Often parents do not know about their children staying away from school and if they do many, particularly on the Reserve and East Carnarvon, feel helpless to make them go or don't even make an effort. Talking about the problem of truancy a woman, who had recently moved into a town house said:

- I'm having a battle with (my sons) to go to school. (One of them) is not going to school anymore he's finished. He's fifteen now. They wants him to go back but he doesn't like to go on mowing lawns. L. is having

problems with her son also. He ducks school in the morning, he's only about 11 or 12. They get sent to school in the morning, nothing you can do about it....just wait till they get sent to Perth. We went to court last time for (my youngest son), he'd been stealing. So we always have the thought that he might go away to a home, cause he wouldn't go to school here. That's all we can do. He wants to go to school in Hedland but we can't send him up there; we can't make out why he wants to go, we don't even know: his father and mother. T.'s kids kept skipping school. Poor old (mother) is on the booze all the time. She wouldn't know whether her kids are going to school or out the backyard. See....they duck school; they comes up here to (my sons)....you ask them: "have you finished school?", they say "yeah" and they never been to school.. chasing mullets or something. They go off anywhere. We have been giving (my youngest son) a hiding all the time he's been ducking school. If we had nothing to do me and my husband we would be on to him all the time.

In the unfamiliar world of school the Aboriginal child's peers who share his background and his views of the world around him, become increasingly important. But the values and behaviour pattern prevailing in these groups usually collide with the requirements of the school. Drinking, for instance, was not at all uncommon among Aboriginal high school children and parents expressed concern about it. "Many of these kids here drink and that's why so many of them leave school early if you ask me" a woman remarked. And a young woman, guardian of a teenage girl who had been committed because of stealing, told me how hard it was to control youngsters in Carnarvon:

- They're a wild mob here. My sister sometimes just takes off with some other Coloured girls....takes me days to find her. Only the other week I was looking for her, she hadn't been to school for a couple of days. I found her one evening in those bushes near the pub. I saw these young boys and girls there, they had no clothes on and they had flagons (of wine D.) with them.

When intoxicated, fights erupt easily among these children and indeed it happened that boys who had been caught in drunken brawls said they didn't feel like going to school because they had been beaten up and were sore all over.

Whatever values are stressed in these peer groups success

at school is certainly not one of them. Teachers, in fact, said that there was a tendency among Aboriginal children to turn against those who did well at school. "I've seen", the principal of the high school said, "that when an Aboriginal boy or girl tends to do well in academic things the others try to pull him back. They're not encouraged by their peers to excell..... Take the sporting, physical side out of things and I get the impression that where an Aboriginal child tends to do well by White standards in social things, or in community, citizenship type things or in academic things that there is a tendency for the others to try to topple him down".Whether and how Aboriginal children actively discourage the academically successful ones amongst them, would certainly be worth further investigation. It seems to me, however, that the occurrence of active discouragement will not be widespread. The sense of alienation, threatening an Aboriginal child who turns away from his peers makes compliance with peer-group norms, so I presume, a more or less automatic reaction, rather than an actively enforced one. Much of the child's dilemma of the conflicting demands of school and peer group is reduced by the fact that the culture experienced by the child at home is closer to that of his peers than to that of the school. A few children, however, whose parents, according to teachers, strove to conform to mainstream White values were put under strong pressure. These children, a teacher said, "are the butt of so much rudeness by other Aboriginals.....rude remarks are written about them in the toilets....(they) have tremendous trouble at school".

Corresponding with their position in the wider society Aboriginal children at school form a rather sharply distinguished group. Talking to schoolchildren and young adults I always tried to find out how they regarded White children and the relations between the two groups. Some children said that they didn't like White children and did not seek their company. A young man said:

- I never mixed with White kids much, they curse you, call you names, say you're a black so and so.

Generally, however, young people said they got on well with White children and antagonism did not appear to be widespread. Yet, despite this lack of antagonism children from both groups have very few friendship ties and generally keep to themselves. Observing children in the playgrounds at school one sees groups mainly formed along colour lines.

As a teacher explained: "(Aboriginal and White) children do tend to form their own groups if left to their devices.. ...if you kick two footballs on the oval you'll find generally that one lot of native boys might take the football down one end and then a predominantly White group up the other end....there would be some natives in the White group and there'd probably be one or two Whites in the native group... ..but generally you can just about draw a line and take five out each group and swap them over and they'll be all black or all White". Now, this matter of segregation in the schools undoubtedly goes back to historically grown social conditions and interaction patterns in the adult world. Apparently schools do not succeed in breaking through these patterns which can be attributed partly to the fact that school culture does reflect the beliefs and values of one group only: that of the Whites. This has been said before but is repeated here because, to my mind, it forms the foundation of the separateness of White and Aboriginal children which in turn prevents the exchange of ideas between the two groups. For the Aboriginal children the transition of life at home to the world of the school is much greater than for the White ones and this has two consequences. Firstly it makes Aboriginal children retreat to their own Aboriginal peers, as said before; but, secondly, it provides an extra incentive for the White children not to venture out into the Aboriginal group as its ways and values are not rewarded in the school.

An important question is to what extent Aboriginal children suffer from the direct confrontation with ideas and habits that are foreign to them and from their economic deprivation in the face of White wealth. Whether they do feel inferior through this and to what reactions this leads I feel unable to say as this would need special research among the children. Generally I found it very difficult to talk with children about school; often when I tried, I met with inexorable silence. This was especially so if I asked things that may have been explained as a reproach or as something that a teacher would ask. Thus, when finding a child home on a weekday it would be foolish to ask "Didn't you feel like going to school today....?" or something of that kind. Talking with young adults was usually easier, although I would not like to draw to many conclusions from this either. Looking back at their schooldays young adults did not express a great antipathy towards the school, nor to White kids that went to school with them.

Certainly they gave few indications that they felt inferior to the White kids, or had suffered from being unable to meet required standards. Yet, sometimes such feelings were revealed. A young woman, for instance, told how at school she always felt embarrassed at lunch-time: "These White kids had good lunches, chocolate milk and everything....I hardly had any lunch at all". The principal of one of the primary schools told me that some of his Aboriginal pupils who lived in shacks or other substandard dwellings didn't dare tell him where they lived: "Even if I tried to accompany them to their home they wouldn't tell me where they lived. They just kept me walking and walking and in the end I gave up".

About minority group children's education De Vos (1972: 454) wrote: "The poor showing of some ethnic minorities in school may be due in part to the frequent implicit negative images held by teachers of a majority group towards their ethnically and socially different charges....such difficulties are also due to the early internalization of negative self images and to the operation of a peer group culture that sanctions against ready compliance with the objectives of school". Through the working of these factors one could say that it is precisely at school that negative self-images of Aboriginal children are cultivated and this could explain the change one notices in children's behaviour after reaching school-age. While pre-school children and children in the lower grades of primary school were usually very open and spontaneous in their behaviour towards me, many older children were shy, withdrawn and extremely self-conscious.

In conclusion to this chapter the question should be asked whether integrated schools as they function today are really in the interest of Aboriginal children. Schools which stress essentially White values that Aboriginal children do not experience at home or which their parents and they feel unable to live up to, seem to alienate many Aboriginal pupils from their own sococultural environment and to lead them to believe that they themselves and their way of life are inferior. A woman, very well integrated in White society, said:

- They should have separate schools for Aboriginal children otherwise their confidence is broken. At school I always had the feeling that more attention was paid to White kids, even though this may have been untrue. You had to chew up a lot. I always felt: it is us that's got to improve, the

Whites don't have to do that, they are not under pressure, you feel very conscious of yourself feeling as though you always have to walk on tiptoe.

CHAPTER 8.

DRINKING PROBLEMS.

"Soon as ever it got dark Jamadjis they all used to stop in camp. Nobody used to go to town. If the police find you in town, put you in jail, kick you in the backside or put you in jail. Might put you in jail, if you don't listen to them. As soon as he tell you to go home...go, hurry up, go home, if you don't you 'll end up in jail. Go, as soon as ever sun sets. Nowadays you stop there till dark, you come home and everybody sleep. When you come home you make big noise in the camp. Fighting, always fighting, don't give the old people a rest. When they come home they don't settle down properly, some of them still fighting and some of them go in jail. Fight in the camp...this camp belongs to the Jamadjis. Everybody is not friend. When you come home they always fighting. Men don't let old people have a rest. Poor old people...some sick person can't get a rest and gets sick properly. Lot of them under the ground now. Nobody used to have a rest with the young fellows making a noise. Nobody sleeps...always drinking. Burns your heart when you're drinking, burns your heart to nothing. Kill you. Lot passed away through that. Used to be lot more now. Grog is killing the lot of them".

With this translation of his own text spoken in the Pandjima language an old man in Carnarvon gave vent to his feelings of concern about a serious problem in many Aborigines' lives: that of drunkenness. Excessive consumption of alcoholic drink is certainly part of a White stereotype of Aboriginal behaviour but this should not make us close our eyes for the fact that many Aborigines themselves are gravely worried about excessive drinking. In previous chapters it was shown already that drinking is seen by some informants as an obstacle in achieving a reasonably satisfactory social and economic standard of living and the same theme will recur in a next chapter again. Alcoholism severely disturbs the relations between many husbands and wives and thus results in family disorganization. Separation of husband and wife, often brings financial hardship to a mother and her children. Family income is also seriously affected when husband and/ or wife spend the bulk of their earnings on drinking parties. Drinking causes some mothers to neglect their children and on the whole leads to a very loose

social control of children which, in turn, makes it hard for the latter to adapt to the discipline required of them at school. Lack of control leads children into deviancy from legal norms and makes a disproportionate number of Aboriginal children state wards. Alcoholism is a source of serious friction between the generations and disturbs the peace to such an extent that many expressed a wish to live away from other Aborigines. Getting together with the mates for a drink interferes with Aboriginal employment and makes some workers loose their job because of irregular attendance.

Such are the problems confronting members of the Aboriginal community and it would be foolish to disregard them. Yet, great care should be taken not to view heavy drinking and the troubles associated with it in isolation from other characteristics of the Aborigines' socioeconomic situation. This is precisely what many Whites in Carnarvon do: oversimplifying their judgment of the Aboriginal situation by putting a short-sighted stress on problems connected with excessive drinking. As I will show, drinking problems are closely related to historical, social and economic conditions of the Aboriginal community some of which I have described in this book. Drinking may be seen as a symptom of the malignant nature of these conditions.

Before giving a few brief cases that illustrate the effects of drinking on everyday life I will give some figures indicating the extent of drinking problems in the Aboriginal community. One indication of this can be found in the number of charges of breach of law preferred by Carnarvon police against both Aborigines and Whites.

Table 16.
Number of Court charges preferred by Carnarvon Police against adults. (Source: Carnarvon Police, with permission of Crown Law Department)

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1975
charges against Aborigines	335	423	487	645	617	956
charges against Whites	172	272	184	228	191	292

As table 16 shows, Aborigines, who troughout the years for which figures are given here have made up roughly 20 percent of the population of the district, apparently are the object of a strikingly disproportionate number of charges of breach of law. Now, the great majority of these

charges are related to drunkenness and/or disorderly conduct while under influence and are classified as charges under the Police Act.

Table 17 gives a classification and numbers per category of charges against Aboriginal and White adults.

Table 17.
Type of Court charges preferred by Carnarvon Police against adults. (Source: Carnarvon Police, with permission of Crown Law Department)

	1969		1972		1975	
	Aborig-ines	Whites	Aborig-ines	Whites	Aborig-ines	Whites
Criminal Code	31	54	63	73	75	51
Police Act	231	73	465	86	787	84
Traffic Act	14	45	54	43	57	79
Liquor Act	7	4	32	12	12	7
Other	52	16	31	14	25	71

Charges under the Police Act almost invariably deal with drunkenness. A man or woman merely walking along the street while intoxicated may be picked up by the police and charged under this act and this, in fact, does happen. Other charges under the Police Act deal with disorderly behaviour while drunk. A great number of charges under this act deal with men or women who are picked up by the police while brawling outside the pub or harassing friends or relatives at their houses. Charges under the Criminal Code deal with things like assault and theft mainly. Offences against the Traffic Act need little explanation. The Liquor Act regulates things as closure hours of bars, consumption of liquor on unlicensed premises, offences committed on unlicensed premises; charges listed under others include maintenance claims of deserted wives against husbands, offences against mining laws and the like.

As the figures show Aboriginal behaviour deviates from legal norms more frequently than that of Whites, but taking the nature of offences into account one can hardly speak of widespread criminal behaviour amongst them. If plain drunkenness would no longer be considered an offence, for instance, deviancy figures for Aborigines would show a substantial decline. Also, compared with Whites, Aborigines have a greater risk of being picked up while drunk. Drinking, particularly in East Carnarvon and on the Reser-

ve, is more an outdoor activity among Aborigines than among Whites. To give just one example: Aborigines who as a rule do not own vehicles, as most Whites do, have to go home after a drinking party on foot and thus are clearly visible when stumbling along the roadside while drunk. Another thing which may influence the high number of charges for drunkenness, could be that the police pays extra attention to drinking in the Aboriginal section of the Carnarvon community. Although, as will be shown in more detail later, Aborigines in majority hold no serious grudges against the Whites they are rather antagonistic towards the police who, they feel, "picks on Aborigines" and arrests drunken Aborigines freely while closing an eye for Whites who are likewise under influence.

Drinking behaviour in the town group differs noticeably from that of the people on the Reserve and in East Carnarvon. In the town one finds the greatest percentage of men and women who do not or do hardly drink; but even if they drink regularly their drinking generally does not entail grave social problems. It is in the East Carnarvon and Reserve group that we find most of the people who are arrested because of drunkenness, who get into drunken fights with their wife, other relatives, or friends, receive injuries because of this and spend a disproportionate part of their income on drink. For such people we might use the term "problem drinkers", a term which corresponds with judgments of Aborigines themselves. The proportion of problem drinkers in each of the residential groups is given in table 18.

Table 18.
Percentage of people per residential group with drinking problems.

	men	women
Reserve	64	47
East Carnarvon	67	52
Town	19	3

Approximately two-thirds of all the men of the Reserve and East Carnarvon sample are problem drinkers against 19 percent of those of the town group (1); figures for the women show very much the same relations between the groups although the percentages are lower. Taking in mind all the other characteristics of the residential groups as presen-

ted before, the data on drinking behaviour suggest that drinking problems are related to the socioeconomic position of people. Of course, one could say, as many of the Whites in Carnarvon do, that alcoholism is the cause of the socioeconomic deprivation of certain Aboriginal groups. Against this theory, however, it can be said that the socioeconomic foundations of these residential groups have been laid in a historic period during which it was difficult, and legally forbidden, for the majority of Aborigines to drink. Until 1964 it was an offence for an Aborigine to receive and drink alcoholic liquor and for others to supply such liquor (Biskup, 1973:258; Report Royal Comm., 1974:24). Only Aborigines who were exempted from the application of the Native Welfare Act were allowed to drink and these were mainly the people who later made up the town group. By the time the prohibition of consumption of alcoholic liquor had been lifted the social characteristics of the residential groups had been largely formed.

Although breach of law by juvenile Aborigines is not so clearly related to excessive drinking, for the sake of completeness figures of juvenile delinquency are given in the tables 19 and 20 below.

Table 19.
Numbers of Court charges preferred by Carnarvon Police against juveniles. (Source: Carnarvon Police, with permission of Crown Law Department).

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1975
Charges against Aboriginal juveniles	67	91	115	88	75	228
Charges against White juveniles	16	36	26	70	103	97

Table 20 on next page.

Table 20.
Types of Court charges preferred by Carnarvon Police against juveniles. (Source: Carnarvon Police, with permission of Crown Law Department).

Classification of charges	1969		1972		1975	
	Aborigines	Whites	Aborigines	Whites	Aborigines	Whites
Criminal Code	37	5	30	32	135	26
Police Act	10	0	32	8	31	8
Traffic Act	18	11	25	24	54	58
Liquor Act	0	0	1	0	5	1
Others	2	0	0	6	3	4

Undoubtedly troubles caused by drinking are common, particularly on the Reserve and in East Carnarvon. Here it was an almost daily sight to see drunkards staggering along, to see fights erupt between drinking partners and/or household members, to see the police making arrests. On the Reserve people made some concerted efforts to curb the disturbances created by drinking behaviour. Under the influence of the earlier mentioned Guda Club a "caretaker" had been chosen to see to it that drinking did not take place on the Reserve itself and that drunkards would not disturb the peace. In difficult matters the caretaker sometimes received assistance from the "Committee", the active core of members of the Guda Club. Generally it was very difficult to keep drunkards in check who were impervious to reason. Often the caretaker's last resource was to beat them into submission which did not enhance his popularity and led to reproaches that he picked on particular people only. In most instances the only way to stop a violent drunkard was to call for the police, something which must have been frustrating for people who generally disliked the police. I witnessed many disputes over the need to call for police assistance and to me it seemed that in their hearts people were very unhappy about their inability to keep drunkards under control and have their relatives and friends arrested and locked up.

In East Carnarvon where social cohesion was not as strong as on the Reserve a communal check on drunken misbehaviour was virtually absent. It was left to the individual households inhabiting a camp to cope with drunkards. Camps in East Carnarvon fluctuated strongly in composition, particularly those that had a bad reputation for rowdiness

caused by "grog parties". Relatively few camps in this area were "quiet" ones, in fact. Partly because of the lack of community control East Carnarvon seemed to attract an increasing number of "drifters": travelling Aborigines from all over Western Australia and even other states, single White men many of whom were pensioners, people from the Reserve who were notorious drinkers and found community control there too oppressive.

Disturbance of daily life created by excessive drinking was such an influential factor in many people's life and occupied their minds to such an extent that it seems useful to give an impression of its role by presenting a few cases. Cases described are based on entries in my diary and deal with observations and conversations of one day at a time.

I.

A public holiday today, all shops, banks and other businesses are closed. Tom and Mack (2) get out of a taxi in the main street. They have come to see whether their pension cheques have arrived yet but, unaware of the public holiday, find the post office closed. As we stand there talking, the door of the police station on the opposite side of the street opens and John and Bill come out. They have spent three days in jail after having been picked up outside the pub where they were fighting each other. As the five of us return to the Reserve we find it almost deserted. Rosie who is hurrying towards the dry bed of the river that runs along the Reserve yells out to us: "Come on there's a fight going on". As we get to the river bank a crowd of onlookers are standing around two young men and a girl. One of the men is reeling on his feet, looking very drunk and muttering unintelligibly. The other young man is lying down while the girl kneeling beside him slaps his face with her hand which bleeds badly. Apparently he is unconscious but soon comes round again and is helped to his feet by the girl who is drunk and not very steady herself. As I take the girl and the second young man, who has a bleeding wound on the back of his head, to the hospital, I hear the story of the fight. Frank, the first-mentioned young man, had invited Kitty and Eric for a drink down the river. Frank who was "pretty pissed" made some rude remarks about Kitty's mother. As Kitty went for Frank with a broken bottle she cut herself with it but in her drunken state blamed Eric who tried to stop her. In the quarrel that flared up between Kitty and Eric then,

Kitty hit Eric with a piece of iron. As Eric tells his story Kitty smiles, nods her head in agreement and generally appears to be the best of friends with Eric again, a feeling which seems mutual.

II.

Driving past the pub on the dirt road that leads to the Reserve I overtake a young woman staggering along the dusty roadside. As I stop I recognize Anny, a young mother of three children, who looks a pitiful sight. Her face is swollen up, blood runs from her lips down her chin, her cheeks and forehead are chafed,,the front of her dress is ripped open from top to bottom. Anny, who is drunk, sobs uncontroleably and tells me that her boyfriend whom she had been drinking with in the pub has beaten her up and sent her home. I take her to the Reserve to the hut of her grandmother where her father is playing cards with some friends. He flies into a rage when he sees her: "Serves you fucking right you slut, you shouldn't go near that bastard, you better stay home instead of boozing all day". "You're no fucking good yourself", Anny shouts and as she grabs an axe: "Nobody wants me here on this Reserve, I'm gonna kill myself". She takes off into the thick scrub surrounding the Reserve. Her father, one of the committee members and myself go after her but are unable to find her. (The next morning I meet her in the main street, she can't remember anything about yesterday afternoon: "Only that my face hurts").

III.

One afternoon I visit Mrs. George in East Carnarvon to make an appointment for an interview. Mrs. George lives in a corrugated iron hut with two rooms and a kitchen. Next to the hut is an old caravan which she and her husband have closed off: "because there was always drunkards spending the night there". Mrs. George complains about the people who live in the camp next to her: "Every night they get drunk and make a lot of noise. In daytime they hardly dare to open their mouth, don't talk at all, just sit down there but they really change in the evening. I can't get a proper rest; nighttime they're always fighting and I'm worrying: who's getting a hiding this time? Kids? a woman? Why they want to drink so much? My son is like that too, he's in and out of jail, he is in Geraldton jail at the moment for stealing three cartons of beer. He hid himself

around here but I got sick of the police coming here every day looking for him so I made him give himself up.

IV.

It is Saturday morning; East Carnarvon is basking in a scorching hot sun. On the dirt road that runs through the area an occasional car sends big clouds of dust into the air. Charley and his girlfriend Margaret walk slowly along the road and as I stop they ask me to take them to Mary's camp. Mary used to live on the Reserve (she told me once that she felt free away from the Reserve, "away from everybody"). "Nothing doing at the Reserve now", Charley says, "they've all gone to town shopping or to the pub, or they're drinking in the scrub along the river". As the car leaves the main road the track narrows and winds past bushes that dot the sandflats. Broken glass is everywhere along the track, sometimes we pass a heap of empty bottles and other wreckage of previous camps. At the end of the track is a tiny corrugated iron hut and in front of it, sheltering from the morning sun under a big bush, a group of people. Three young men, boys almost, seem to be asleep on the ground. Next to them, close to each other, four women and three men, one of whom is White. They pass a bottle of wine around. When one of the young men sits up and looks at me, Mary says "He's allright, he is a friend of the Aboriginal people". As we join the circle Mary nods at the three dozing young men and giggles: "they've still got a hangover". Asked where her husband is, Mary tells me that he is in jail with a four months sentence for stealing a car. One of the other women than cuts in and says that her husband left her 8 months ago. "He went to Roebourne, hasn't been back since....he can fucking well stay away too now. I don't want him back. They tell me he's got another woman there". As the bottle goes around and a few more are opened there's not much conversation. Between periods of silence, Charley is asked where he has been last night, one makes remarks about mutual acquaintances and things that have happened to them recently. When the party runs out of cigarettes George, the White man, is asked to go to the petrol station on the highway to get some. "Hans here will drive you over there, won't you Hans?". In the car George tells me that he works in a shearing team and is holidaying at present. He has no relatives or friends in Carnarvon. Last night he met Mary and her company at the pub and bought three dozen bottles of beer and some

flagons for them. "We had a good party and they have been really good to me. When I went to sleep they even tucked me in, gave me a woman but I couldn't do any good with her....the old Johnnie wouldn't come up". Back in the camp the bottles are empty, and Charley, Margaret, George and two of the young men, who turn out to be visitors from Roebourne, go back to town with me. As I drop them off at the pub at their request the two Roebourne boys ask me for a few dollars to buy a drink.

V.

Amidst a group of Reserve people and a few visitors from East Carnarvon Bob, one of the leading old men tells about his trip to Roebourne. Stanley, a single man walks past the group. His face looks battered, one eye is bung up, stitches run across his cheeck and forehead. "Hey tami (grandson in female line D.) come here", Bob calls the young man over. "What have you been up to boy?" "I been fighting" Stanley answers. "Why you boys always keep fighting, that's something I would like to find out?" "Well old boy", Stanley replies, "as soon as you go for a drink with a mob the fighting starts. A man can't have a quiet drink here, everyone is following you when you have a bottle". "Never mind the others, you just look after yourself, it's you that got to stop this". Bob then goes on talking about the problems of Aborigines, about the relations between the old and young people, about the Law and Aboriginal future. His words greatly impress his audience who nodd approvingly. "In Onslow" Bob says "I brought the young people in this meeting we held there. Now, the way I look at it, this is one of our problems: What are the young fellas going to do? I asked them: what you want to do? You want to help us old people....work together, get things done for the Jamadji, or do you want to go on cutting each other up, drink yourself to death.. ..is that what you want? I didn't get no answer and I don't get no answer in this Carnarvon place too. But maybe we should blame ourselves. Us old fellows should show the young people the way, give them an example. We should call them in our meetings and listen what they have to say or they might think we are rubbishing them. If, maybe, we get this station the government promises us, the young people must help us, do the writing for us, keep the books and that. They've been to school. learned a lot of things". Jack, one of the committee members who is not well liked

because he beats people up when they're drunk, interrupts: "I don't agree with you there old boy. These young people here are absolutely useless. There is only one thing they're interested in and that's the jimmijong (bottle D.). Now I recken these young blokes that have gone to school and learned a lot are sunken deeper than the old ones; I reckon they're going back to the stone age". In the discussion that follows almost everyone sides with Bob, and Peter an other old man says that he'll tell the young men that same evening that they will be holding a meeting tomorrow night. Then the party breaks up and a group of women stay behind to play cards. As they play, Bert, a middle-aged man, very drunk at that moment staggers towards the group. Suddenly, Annie an old and frail woman, begins to bash Bert on the head with a billycan while furiously shouting in her own Aboriginal language. Bert stands still, bows his head and does not make any attempt to ward off the blows, without blinking an eye he says "Go on mum, you do what you like". Then the old woman stops and muttering angrily to the by-standers and probably herself walks away. Bert looks at me: "She's my mother (classificatory mother D.) I can't do anything against it, tribal Law you know". The card game continues but is interrupted again when Bert invites two married women for "a fuck". At first, the woman only says: "You shouldn't say a thing like that", as if they are talking to a naughty child, but then as Bert persists one of the women goes and gets her husband who walks up to Bert and lashes his face with a piece of gas-tube: "You leave the women alone you dirty drunken bastard". Bert gazes at him with impassive eyes, he is too drunk to defend himself and probably he doesn't care either, he has gone through many fights as his battered face clearly shows. Daisy who gives Bert a feed every now and then manages to lead him away for a liedown. Later, the old woman, tells me very indignantly that Hubert had made sexual ouvertures at her too.

VI.

It is an early winter morning with an overcast sky. A cold desert wind blows across the Reserve into the tents and huts where some people stay in bed to keep warm. Polly and Sam and their family are eating pieces of damper and some leftover bits of a kangarootail stew. Outside their tent they have built a windbreak of pieces of corrugated iron which shelters a little smoky fire. Polly complains

of the noise that the drunkards made in the camp the night before: "This mob got back from station, yesterday and you know they all follow the people with the money". Sam's son in law Mick is "full as a boot" as he says himself and Polly rebukes him. He doesn't answer and wanders off into a drizzling rain that has just set in. As the family leaves for town in a taxi I go and visit Daisy and Charley the parents of Mick. Daisy and one of her daughters are on the verandah and have lit a fire in an old sump of a car engine. A frying pan is placed over the fire and big chunks of fat with a little meat on it and onions are sizzling in it. Mick joins us and sits down on an empty crate. As we lean on the verandah railing watching the rain get heavier we hear how in the community hall a quarrel gets under way. The back door of the hall is flung open and a man tumbles out landing flat on his back. Charley, a committee member, appears in the door and shouts angrily: "I told you before: don't rubbish me...." The man, Tony, looks pretty full, just as his wife Lucy who steps out into the rain too. As Charley knocks Tony, who is struggling to his feet, back into the mud, Lucy calls him all names under the sun: "You fucking rotten bastard who you think you are, you can't go around here telling people what to do, you got no say over us, you lousy stinking prick". Tony in the meantime has taken off his shirt and the bandage that is around his arm. His arm is covered with big wounds that he received after falling into a fire while drunk. As the rain keeps falling and makes everything cold, muddy and miserable the two men keep hammering at each other and knocking each other to the ground. They fight slowly but persistently. Charley is bleeding from his forehead and walks back to his hut returning with a couple of boomerangs stuck in his belt and a heavy stick in his right hand. Lucy swears, picks up a stick too and rushes at him but is so unsteady that she misses completely, swerves and falls sideways into the slush. Some of the bystanders appreciate this very much and laugh hilariously. But Daisy says: "I reckon that's no good what he's doing: fighting with them sticks, that's something the old fellas used to do, they was very cruel people them days". Mick who so far has only cast a fuddled glance at the fight, occasionally shaking his head as in contempt, says: "I'll flatten that Tony mum, I'll flatten any man in the camp. I'll flatten any fucking cop too", and he shouts: "Anyone that wants can have a round with me". Then his chin sinks on his chest again as he mutters

to himself "It's a hard life in this country". Tony who has landed on the ground once again nurses his hand which is badly swollen up. "I'll make you listen, I'll make you listen...." Charley shouts and Tony, giving in, says: "Allright, I've had enough I'll listen". As he and his wife covered in mud, stumble back to their camp made of tarpaulin and corrugated iron Lucy curses Charley. The last-named, still worked up, remains behind in the rain gesticulating with his hands and exclaiming that the drunkards are a disgrace to the camp and that he, Charley must see to it that they behave decently and if they refuse he'll just have to knock some sense into them. An old man seeking shelter under Daisy's verandah says: "These people don't know how to behave. That's why the White people think we're lower than ants".

Drinking problems, it was said before, correspond with the socioeconomic conditions people live in. Such a connection has been noted by many others before and has inspired answers to the question why people drink excessive quantities of alcohol. Thus, some see it as a consequence of frustrated attempts to achieve goals that are generally valued in society, a supposition which should explain why the so-called socially disadvantaged are more prone to this kind of behaviour. Another explanation is that the consumption of excessive quantities of alcoholic drinks has become ingrained into a habitual or subcultural pattern. Very much the same question has earlier been discussed in relation to intrafamily relations, particularly weak marital and parental ties and in the next chapter this question will return again. Therefore I will not theorize about it here but will look at some empirical data regarding this question.

Speaking against the idea that frustration caused by inability to live up to the values of the wider society are at the roots of Aboriginal drinking problems is the fact that such frustrations as yet do not appear to be widespread among Aboriginal people of Carnarvon. It has been shown for instance, that there is a surprisingly high level of satisfaction with jobs. Aborigines generally do not worship material success like the Whites do, nor do they place so much value on occupational and educational achievement. In fact, a major source of frustration is the excessive consumption of alcohol and the human relation problems brought about by it.

Asking people about the reasons why they drink or in the

case of non-drinkers, why they think their friends or relatives drink, only a minority (11 percent) pointed at feelings of personal inadequacy or personal frustration. Only one woman in this group gave a model answer relating feelings of personal frustration to the socioeconomic conditions Aborigines find themselves in:

- You get sick of yourself, if you got a home you feel much better and comfortable, but if you're staying with someone else you got to battle and want to get out. I think that some Aborigines drink so much because of the situation they're in. Now that they've got homes they feel better and forget about the drinking and fighting. That's why the people in town drink less than on the Reserve. In the Sandhurst (pub where mainly Aborigines drink D.) there's more people from here (East Carnarvon D.) and the Reserve than from the town.

The majority of respondents in this category, did not put such a clear link between feelings of unhappiness and a structural inability of Aborigines to achieve general Australian values and ideals.

- It's only a habit and also I think that these people have no willpower when they drink, I suppose they forget all their problems, think they're the happiest people in the world. Like my stepbrother, he goes through all his earnings on the same evening as he gets his pay.
- It's just a feeling I got sometimes....makes me feel better.
- It gives them a bit more courage, that's why I drink. They don't drink here to be sociable, just to get their share.
- I think they want to forget about something. When I drink I'm happy and don't think of my wife and kids. When I'm sober I worry about them.

Strongly contrasting with this is the opinion of an equal percentage of respondents (10 percent) who say that drinking is something for the people who got no worries, no responsibilities:

- It's hard to say, why people drink so much. If I had the chance, I might be just the same. I just pull myself together because of my job and the kids. Before I had the kids I was a big boozer. I was drunk every night.

You see, once you had a drink you don't know when to stop. I just drank because I had nothing to worry about.
- Most of them drink because they got money in their pockets, so who cares? They drink for the pleasure I think....I don't believe they drink because they are unhappy.

The greatest proportion (37 percent) of informants, however, said that drinking was a social thing. Taking part in a drinking bout was seen both as a consequence of and a means to social interaction and symbolized a kind of belonging and solidarity. Although people were quick to point out that drinking in a group might get out of hand and lead to fights, as was illustrated by the words of a man appearing in case V, it seldom happens that people go and drink by themselves. Those who have the money for a drink nearly always look for drinking partners and refusing a drink which is offered to you is easily taken as an insult. Earlier, for instance, we saw how some Aborigines pointed at the advantages of a job on a station, enabling them to get away occasionally from the pressure to have a "grog on" with their mates. Answers pointing at the social nature of drinking were:

- This (drinking) has been going on for years; of course we're not helping ourselves this way, but you can't refuse when a drink is offered to you.
- It's the Jamadjis' downfall the drink. They race each other who can drink the most, it's a mad mob really... ..but wherever Blackfellas are together they're happy.
- Once you drink you're not satisfied, you just want to keep going, I see a lot of other blokes drink and I go and join them.
- Jamadji drinks because of his mates: "oh, there's so and so with a flagon". The trouble is Blackfella doesn't know when he's had enough.
- Some of these buggers get drunk every day, can't go to work....they got too much help from the others, they shout them.
- I don't know what makes some Jamadjis drink so much. Might be you run into another mate that reckons he can drink more than you and coax you into a drink. Sometimes after you've had enough a mate might ask you to have another drink.
- Mates start you off mainly, that's why it's a social thing. If a man is on his own he doesn't bother to drink.

15 percent of the informants said that drinking was mainly a habit, and from their answers it appeared that this explanation was very similar to the former since it stressed the collective nature of this habitual pattern. A number of informants referred to the fact that heavy drinking was a habit among the Whites as well:

- It's only a bloody habit that's all, you got nothing else to do and a bloke comes around and says come and have a drink.
- They think a lot of the White people drink so they can do the same thing....they see too much of it going on, the more they drink the more they want, some of them can't go without grog for a day.
- It's just their willpower, they can't say no; it's a habit....most of them have drunk from when they were young, it's hard for them to get out of it. I know kids that have to leave school through that, they go down the pub in the weekend, leave school at fourteen. I've seen a lot of that done and I don't think the parents can stop the kids from doing that.

Idleness and boredom caused by unemployment was mentioned by a further 8 percent of the respondents while a high percentage (19 percent) said they didn't know what could be the reason for their own or others' alcohol problems.

Evidence from this community does not suggest that excessive drinking is caused by frustrations based on socio-economic inequality, although undoubtedly this type of drinking does occur. Aboriginal drinking behaviour, moreover, cannot simply be subsumed under the label of deviant behaviour, in the sense of deviance from a general norm, but rather shows how people may be subject to different constraints and incentives in different situations. I would hesitate to use the term norm here at all, for what are we to take as its empirical referent: behaviour that is valued, or actually occurring behaviour? Also, when talking about norms, do differences as to their source have to be taken into account? Superficially seen, for instance, Aborigines expressing a distaste for excessive consumption of alcohol seem to conform to a norm prevalent in White society. But although people who disapprove of drinking do occasionally refer to what is considered "proper" among the Whites, aversion to drinking seems to be much more pragmatically grounded in a dislike of the damaging effects of drinking on interpersonal relations and peaceful living.

Even heavy drinkers recognize the disruptive effects of drinking and say that it is "silly" to drink so much. Yet, as indicated by the relatively high proportion of people pointing at social pressure and habit as reasons for drinking, they also feel an urge to "join the mob" and "not to be left out of things". This attitude was illustrated by the behaviour of Bert (case V) a notorious drinker who was in and out of jail for being drunk and disorderly. Drinking nearly always led him into trouble and made it virtually impossible for him to stick to a job thus keeping him in great poverty. Once Bert was really hard up and got himself a job on a sheep station arranging for a taxi to pick him up the next morning. On the evening before he was due to leave he decided to go for a drink and I advised against it, fearing that he would get himself in problems again. Bert, acknowledging the risks, said: "You may be right my friend....but I must drink like a man tonight". That same evening I heard that he had been arrested while fighting along the road and consequently he missed out on his job.

Problems related to drinking may point at a weakening of social control mechanisms of family and wider Aboriginal groups, except that of the peer groups in which disapproval of drinking is often absent. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that there is an ever fluctuating influence of the various social units to which Aborigines belong and that at certain times the influence of the peers is dominating all others. Aboriginal elders realize that the structure of social control within their own community cannot cope with misbehaviour caused by drinking. In this light referring to White disapproval of drinking as some elders do when admonishing the young about their addiction to drink, must be seen as an attempt to reinforce their own authority. The necessity of doing this is regretted very much by the elders who see it as a loss of Aboriginal independence, as the abandonment of the last bits of control of their own community. After reprimanding some young men who had disturbed the peace on the Reserve during the previous night, one of the elders called out for all to hear:

- We want to let you know that the Jamadjis have as much power as the White people. You'll also have to listen to Blackfellas. We can have you locked up, but we can also keep you out of trouble .

Calling on the police when a drunkards behaviour became

unbearable was generally disliked, yet, often the only option available. Particularly on the Reserve people expressed regrets at having drunks arrested and down in their hearts were sorry for the "poor fellas". Calling the police lightly was generally condemned.

Of all the Whites with whom they interact, Aborigines have most dislike of the police. Asked if they thought that White people gave Aborigines a "fair go" most people said Whites were allright but explicitly singled out the police. A young man who, by the way, felt little sympathy for Whites in general, said:

- The police here are making it bad I reckon; they think they're the boss of this land but they're not. The police picks on Aboriginal people. I have been punched up and down by the police here. It's no good (lodging complaints) they won't listen to you. I told you before how the White blokes are, they don't listen to a Black bloke. Who do I have to report to, who will listen to you? The judge will take the policeman's word, you never have witnesses when you're beaten up by the police.

Also people who held no grudge against Whites in general reported stories of mistreatment. Some even told me how Aboriginal prisoners were bashed up by policemen while they were wearing handcuffs. Aborigines on their part show their antagonism to the police in fights which erupt when they are arrested. Sometimes the arrested person is given assistance by his drinking companions. In 1974 Carnarvon made the news when a fairly big brawl took place as policemen went to a local hotel to arrest an Aborigine who was charged with assaulting a police officer. In the general fighting that followed, the three policemen attempting the arrest had to retreat and call for reinforcement. Eventually seven Aborigines were arrested and charged with resisting arrest and assaulting the police; five policemen allegedly needed hospital treatment. Irritation with respect to the police also finds expression on the sports field. In football matches it happened that policemen who played in one of the local teams were really given a rough time by Aboriginal opponents in the other team. This was done very openly and deliberately and caused amusement among the Aboriginal spectators. Some however expressed their distaste for this. A young Aboriginal woman whom I asked about membership of sports clubs said:

- I don't like....(name of a footballteam D.) because they fight too much. I reckon that's wrong, it's just a sport and you shouldn't fight. There was a policeman here and B., he's a fairly big Native bloke....and they knocked all his (the policeman's D.) front teeth out and that was done deliberate...give him a black eye....and that was wrong; they got a grudge against him because he's a policeman, but a policeman has got to do his job and whatever he's doing, he's doing his duty....and that's terrible; that's why I never liked that team ever since I was a little girl.

I have never witnessed mistreatment of Aborigines by police myself but still think that stories as told by Aborigines should be taken seriously. The frequent complaints about and hostility to the police warrant further investigation. The position of Aborigines in White communities is a weak one and they come loosers in many sectors of social life. If this holds for those who violate no law, nor break the "rules of decency", one can rightfully worry about the chances for just treatment of those who do, or simply have a bad reputation. It would be difficult, indeed for Aboriginal offenders to meet with White sympathy and sometimes they may even lack support of their own people. Apart from the fact that even the slightest suspicion of physical maltreatment makes investigation a necessity, the whole complex of Aboriginal problems with the law needs attention. Although relations between Aborigines and police are not synonymous with Aboriginal-White relations in general, it cannot be denied that Aboriginal transgression of the law (even if it concerns minor offences) influences attitudes of Whites. Conversely, if Whites are earnest in their endeavour to give Aborigines a "fair deal" and want to establish good relations with them no anomalies in any aspect of Aboriginal-White relations should be tolerated. There are indications that in the administration of justice Aborigines are treated incorrectly and suffer from prejudice.

It would be difficult for a person not trained in Australian jurisprudence to pass judgment over the administration of justice. Therefore, initially, I felt unable to say anything about how Aborigines fare within the penal system. Of course, I witnessed how Aborigines were arrested and often I knew for what offence. About the strictly legal procedures I didn't learn much, apart from being an observer in the local courtroom where, in public court, I

could sit in the gallery and hear how Aborigines, who as far as I observed were never represented by a lawyer, pleaded guilty to the charge and how sentence was thereupon passed. Returning to the field in 1975, however, I learned that a local lawyer, on request of the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia, a voluntary organization, had begun to appear for Aboriginal defendants. It was through his kind cooperation that I got information on actual practice in the Carnarvon Court, information which reveals the difficulties encountered by Aboriginal defendants and which should not be withheld in this study of an Aboriginal community.

At the time I interviewed him the lawyer concerned had become rather critical of the way Aborigines were treated in court procedures. He contacted Aboriginal clients by going to the Petty Sessions Court every morning to interview any Aborigines, appearing in court that morning, who might need help. Most of them did not understand the court procedures at all and usually simply opted for pleading guilty. To the Aboriginal Legal Service he wrote: "Things have happened in this court which make me wonder how many Aboriginals plead guilty when there is no case against them". Aborigines who pleaded guilty did not have to stand trial before a magistrate but could be tried by Justices of the Peace, respectable citizens who have received no legal training at all. Aborigines apparently were under pressure to plead guilty, as the lawyer wrote: "If any hint of a defence is mentioned the police are granted a remand for eight days and a cash deposit is always set by the Justices. This is a powerful incentive to plead guilty". Naturally, an Aborigine who, acting on experience, would expect a sentence of a few days of imprisonment only would not dare to plead not guilty in such a case. Of many defendants, moreover, it would be doubtful if they could get the cash for a deposit. From reports of and talks with the lawyer it appeared that the police did not hesitate in talking an Aboriginal defendant into pleading guilty, that they discussed cases with Justices of the Peace out of court and thus influenced lawsuits, that court officials told the justices what penalties to give, even before the defendant had appeared in court, that magistrates and justices had unconditional faith in the police's version of a case and sometimes flaunted the requirement that every part of an offence must be proven beyond reasonable doubt.

Legal authorities in Carnarvon were rather unhappy about

the lawyer's activities and warned him not to defend Aborigines who pleaded guilty; should he not heed to this warning he was threatened that his business would suffer. Then the police forbid him to interview Aborigines who were to appear in court and as the lawyer wrote to the A.L.S.: "I can (now) speak only to those aboriginals who ask for a sollicitor. Very few aboriginals dare to ask for legal help and do not realize they need it unless they first speak to me. This is why, from now on, I can help only a few aboriginals. There has been a lot of bitterness over (a certain) trial (about a brawl between police and Aborigines D.) and the police see the National Consultative Council and the Aboriginal Legal Service as being responsible for what they consider a new defiance of aboriginals towards the police".

CHAPTER 9.

RELATIONS BETWEEN ABORIGINES AND WHITES: THE SUBJECTIVE VIEW.

In the foregoing the history and present situation of Aborigines in Carnarvon have been treated and some important aspects of relations between Aborigines and Whites have thus already been set forth. Aborigines, it was shown, generally are poor, have high rates on unemployment, live in bad housing, are unsuccessful at school, make up a disproportionate number of people arrested and convicted for breach of the law. In this chapter I will not add essentially new data to my outline of the position of the Aboriginal community vis-à-vis that of the Whites but will briefly look at the nature of Aboriginal-White interaction patterns that accompany these structural relations. The central point of attention, however will be the views that Whites have of Aborigines and that the latter have of their relations with the Whites and of their position within the wider local community.

A few things must be added to the picture of social relations between the two ethnic groups. An important aspect, so far only dealt with in a historical context, is the part which Aborigines play in the political system. Paradoxically I can only characterize their role negatively: neither on a statewide nor on a local level are Aborigines of Carnarvon to any significant extent involved in politics. Of course, all over the state groups of Aborigines have recently become more active in political matters, mobilizing public opinion and putting pressure on authorities to recognize and alleviate problems facing Aboriginal Australians. Such organized movements may be gaining strenght in Carnarvon too. The earlier mentioned Guda Club, for instance, may serve as a starting point and, in fact, has already proven its worth in putting pressure behind certain community projects. In official politics, however, Aborigines were notably absent. Although people of Aboriginal descent made up some 20 percent of the population none of the Carnarvon Shire councillors was an Aborigine. The majority (62 percent) of people in my sample said that they had never voted for state or federal elections and a much greater percentage (84%) had never voted for elections for the Shire Council. I use these figures hesitatingly because, referring to concrete elections that took place during my research, it

appeared that many respondents did not know there were different types of elections. Apart from the fact that until the late sixties the majority of Aborigines were not allowed to vote at all, on a local level they are still handicapped because here only ratepayers can vote. Basically this means that only those people belong to the electorate who own residential or business property in the Shire or who rent such property. This leaves out the Aborigines who live on the Reserve, and most of those who live in East Carnarvon or in camps scattered on the outskirts of town, or because of shortage of housing stay with relatives or friends in town. Now, of course, voting is only one of the possibilities of taking part in the power game of politics and not one of the most influential either. But even at this basic level Aborigines do not play a role of any significance in the political system.

Interaction between Aborigines and Whites generally is of a non-personal nature. Aborigines interact with White people in their capacity of employee, customer, tenant and such-like. In the town group, and to a much smaller extent in East Carnarvon, Aborigines have White neighbours and colleagues but even here close friendship ties between them are rare. Asking them whether they had White friends the majority (70 percent) of informants answered affirmatively, but probing further and combining answers with data based on participant observation it turned out that only about 14 percent of them had more than very superficial personal contacts with White people. What informants apparently meant was that they were "friendly with" White people. Asked who their White friends were informants mentioned workmates, missionaries (or more general: church people), schoolmates, station owners, taxi drivers, welfare officers. They would not normally go and visit these friends nor receive them in their home. Asking them to name three or more of their best friends, my informants, almost without exception mentioned Aborigines, usually relatives. Only one man named exclusively White people as his best friends and he, in fact, was completely integrated in White corporate life.

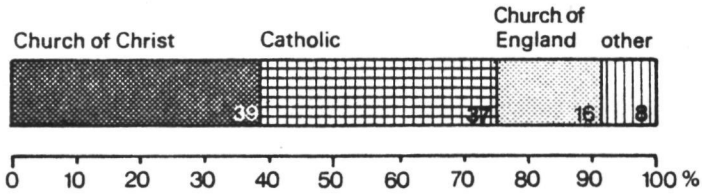
Intermarriage is not all common. A survey of one hundred marriages showed that only four of them were mixed.

Aborigines are not much involved in voluntary organizations. Only 15 percent of the informants claimed to be a member of a club, in most cases a sports club. Australian Rules football is most popular and it are mainly the young men from town and East Carnarvon who are a member of a

football club. People from the Reserve are strikingly absent in all types of associations even in the football clubs. Football and basketball teams are formed largely along colour lines. This is not a question of an absolute separation based on regulations but rather follows friendship and compatibility patterns which in a town like Carnarvon still run very much along ethnic lines. A woman explained to me: "We got two Coloured teams here and we got a couple of White boys in those teams. One of these teams started off as a White team, but the Coloured boys took over. 'Warriors' that's a White team but there's three or four Coloured boys playing in that team, still Coloured people barrack for all these teams". Never during my research did I meet anyone who criticized the ethnic composition of the sportteams. To my Aboriginal informants it was a matter of course that friendship determined a team's composition and, as some said: "The best players are Aboriginal anyway". When the state basketball team came to Carnarvon to play a local team some White girls were added to the Aboriginal girls team. The Carnarvon team lost and the (Aboriginal) leader of the team commented: "If we had all coloured girls in the team we would have won, because a lot of girls play different. If you get girls of the other team they don't play well together with our girls; if you don't know how to play with other girls that's no good".

Apart from football and basketball Aborigines do not take part in many other sports. A few are member of the Carnarvon Racing Club and in a way constitute an Aboriginal elite. Sports like golf, tennis, squash do not attract Aboriginal players at all. A handful of Aborigines take part in associations other than sports clubs. Of all respondents 3 percent said they were a member of associations like Apex, Buffalo Lodge (organizations comparable to Rotary) or the social club of a workers union. Church membership does not have much social significance for Aborigines either. 76 Percent claimed membership of a denomination, all of them of Christian signature. Most respondents added spontaneously that they hardly ever went to services and that they belonged to a Church only in name. Distribution of Church membership is shown in figure 12.

Figure 12.
Distribution (in percentages) of church membership of Aborigines.



With the exception of the Church of Christ none of the other Churches is active in Aboriginal affairs. Clergymen of the Catholic and Anglican Church, for instance, are not involved in the Aboriginal Advancement Association as are those of the Church of Christ. The latter society, as we have seen, is deeply involved in Aboriginal education and also offers accomodation to old-age Aborigines. For this latter purpose they have started a project providing for well-built and well-equiped cottages for old people. Despite all its wholly admirable work the Church of Christ to my mind still has little effect on the integration of the Aboriginal and White section of the Carnarvon community. It clearly is a missionary society with very dedicated and active personnel but with a very small following among the White inhabitants of the town. Probably it is symbolic of the social situation that Churches with a large White membership do not undertake any activities which bring White and Black in close association while the Church that does care for Aboriginal integration is relatively isolated from the Whites.

From the picture sketched so far it appears that although Aborigines are caught in the economic and political structure of the larger Australian society they still form a clearly distinguishable group. Partly their separateness is that of a class, that is, a consequence of a characteristic position in the economic structure. Yet, some Aboriginal groups, particularly those of the town, share their class position with certain groups of Whites. Even here, however, social barriers as illustrated by friendship and marriage patterns remain. Thus the situation in Carnarvon presents another illustration of the incongruence of class and ethnic boundaries. On the other hand, the barrier between Aborigines and Whites is not of a uniform

nature. There is definitely a smaller social distance between Whites and Aboriginal families in town than between Whites and people who live on the Reserve, a difference that reflects the contrasting life styles of these Aboriginal groups. Various factors operate in the maintenance of barriers between the two ethnic groups, many of which can only be understood from a historical point of view. As we have seen the Aboriginal groups described here have different socioeconomic backgrounds often corresponding with differences in socioeconomic histories of Western Australian towns and regions. The fact, for instance, that Carnarvon for a long time was predominantly a squatters' or pastoralists' town may be one of the grounds of the rather strict social division between Aborigines and Whites. In the Northwest squatters had a high position in the status hierarchy and generally kept aloof from "ordinary" working class Whites, let alone Aborigines.

Before looking at the attitudes that Whites have towards Aborigines a few more details will be given about the nature of everyday contacts between members of the two groups. Social segregation of groups in society is usually accompanied by forms of unjust treatment of members of the minority group. In fact, many see discriminatory behaviour as the prime source of segregation. Although legally Aborigines are now fully equal to Whites this does not mean that they are not longer subjected to some forms of unjust treatment, even, as we have seen earlier, in the judicial system itself. Let's have a brief look at the occurrence of "discrimination".

Unlike other West Australian towns where Aborigines are barred from certain parts of the hotels, in Carnarvon there are no restrictions placed on Aboriginal customers. Some informants, however, told me that in certain hotels after one or two beers they had been given to understand that they had had enough and could better move on. Typically the majority of Aborigines go to the same hotel close to the Reserve, a hotel, moreover, that hardly attracts White customers. Thus drinking companions are almost exclusively other Aborigines although occasionally White men team up with a party of Aborigines, sometimes in order to obtain the sexual favours of one of the women of the group. Even Aboriginal men who live in town and have a town job go to this special hotel near the Reserve to drink, and particularly on paydays one finds many members of the Aboriginal community congregating there.

In shops, where generally Aborigines appear to be well treated, certain incidents showed how vulnerable Aborigines are to unjust treatment. One day I accompanied a woman to a supermarket to buy groceries. Being in needy circumstances at that time she had obtained a "ration order" from the Community Welfare office which entitled her to buy stores for a certain amount of money. Having arrived at the cash-desk with her shopping basket a shop assistant took a cake and a frozen chicken out of her basket, put them away and explained to one of her colleagues in a loud voice for everyone to hear: "they're not allowed to have luxuries when buying on a ration order". On another occasion it happened that when I suggested to an Aboriginal companion buying clothes to try on an item that he fancied, the shop assistant, behind my companion's back, shook his head at me making clear that this "was not done". Many of these incidents show that it are chiefly the least sophisticated people from the Reserve and East Carnarvon who suffer from this kind of treatment. Many do not know how to handle such situations, do not know their rights, or are afraid to assert them. It seems as if their relations with Whites are still very much patterned by the models prevailing on the sheep stations where a big status difference between them and the owner and his family exists and where, most importantly, Aborigines have come to realize how dependent they are on these Whites. That the "customer is always right" to these people still seems a completely unknown aspect of Aboriginal-White relations, something to which, of course, their weak economic position only contributes. Many people run up debts with shopkeepers and taxidrivers and therefore loose much of their indepence in their relations with them.

In the local hospital Aborigines are accomodated in the same wards as Whites and appear to receive very much the same service and attention as Whites. Still, here too it could occur that an old man more than a week after having been admitted to hospital had not had any proper examination by a doctor yet, as a friendly nurse informed me. Checking up on her story with the doctor in charge I was told that this was just an old man who was going to die anyway. Asked how he knew this the doctor said: "You know, it's the same as with many African people. Once these niggers think they die they are going to die, there is nothing you can do about it. This old man doesn't want to live anymore". When

I asked him again why he had not examined the old man thoroughly, the doctor replied: "Oh, I'll examine him if you like. I can't see what you complain about. This old native is well taken care of; he's got a clean bed, has his meals regularly, he's better off than he's ever been on that Reserve."

Now, as Antonovsky (1960:83) notes, discrimination is a system of social relations, not just an instance of individual behaviour. Taking up this lead one might say that discrimination is inherent in the social structure of the Carnarvon community, in its arrangement of social groups unequal in status and will continue to exist as long as this social order does not change fundamentally. Behaviour as given in the examples above is an outcome then of social relations accompanying this structural arrangement of groups which could explain why it are particularly the least sophisticated (in European terms) people from the Reserve and East Carnarvon who are most susceptible to forms of unjust treatment. Such individual acts of differential treatment, however, should not be taken as proof of the existence of discrimination, the roots of which lie deeper. But just as instances of unjust behaviour do not necessarily prove the presence of discrimination, does the absence of such behaviour mean that discrimination does not occur. It is maybe in this discrepancy that we find the source of frustration of some White people who, convinced that they give Aborigines a "fair go", cannot understand the lack of significant changes in Aborigines' behaviour patterns and social circumstances. Yet, although accumulations of individual acts and beliefs are not synonymous with social structure it is clear that both are interdependent, Change of structural arrangements may and will be brought about by a cumulation of changes in acts and beliefs underlying such acts, and these changes in turn may be caused by structural changes. It is precisely because they are not synonymous that social structure and individual acts and beliefs can influence and change each other. Beliefs, for instance, need not necessarily reflect the truly existing state of social structural reality, as the coexistence of competing sociological theories indicates. It may therefore be useful, however difficult, to enquire briefly into the views that Aborigines and Whites have of each other and of their relations. First I will present the results of a little survey held among a sample of White inhabitants of Carnarvon.

The White view.

The majority of respondents (79 percent) said that at one time or other they had thought about the position of Aborigines in Australian society. Many remarked that in a community like Carnarvon you had to think about relations with Aborigines as one would inevitably meet them as neighbours or workmates or would simply see them in the streets. Mass media apparently had also stimulated thought about the Aborigines' situation as a number of respondents said that their attention to this subject had been chiefly drawn by newspapers or television. Undoubtedly the then newly elected Federal Labor Government had done much to stimulate interest in the "Aboriginal question". More than previous governments it seemed concerned with the Aboriginal people and determined to improve their situation. To this end certain policy changes were brought into effect, many more proposals for such changes were put forward for discussion. For some Whites this proved too much and quite a few complaints were heard about the help being "dished out" to Aborigines.

With very few exceptions White respondents classified as Aborigines all those who were of Aboriginal descent, a view which corresponds with the low frequency of close personal relations between Aborigines and Whites, regardless of the latter's degree of Aboriginal descent or style of life. Yet, 38 percent of the respondent acknowledged the existence of differences among Aborigines which they mainly found in the degree to which Aborigines were prepared to adopt the "White way of life", that is, whether they worked hard, had good jobs and houses, were dressed properly, in short, whether they behaved "decently". Aborigines were definitely considered to form a separate group in the Carnarvon community; 88 percent of the respondents in fact thought so and nearly half of them (42 percent of the total sample) were of the opinion that this was the choice of the Aborigines themselves, "they just stick together", "only mix amongst themselves", "are only interested in their own family relations" it was said. 33 Percent held the Whites responsible for the barrier between the two groups, but it should be noted that many of them did not refer to Whites in general to support their point but simply referred to their own dislike of mixing up with Aborigines. 19 Percent said that both groups were responsible for their continued separateness, while 6 percent said they didn't know.

Of all respondents 85 percent said they knew Aborigines personally, by far most of them as workmates or employees; a smaller number knew Aborigines as neighbours, through sport activities, church, or social clubs. 4 percent claimed to have Aborigines as personal friends, a few more (13 percent) said they would sometimes meet Aborigines on a party, at barbeques, or would just talk to them in the street, some would receive an occasional Aboriginal visitor in their home. The few personal contacts that exist are almost exclusively with people from the town, the separation between Whites and people from the Reserve and East Carnarvon being almost complete. A fairly high percentage of respondents (56 percent) said that they would be against marriage of a close relative with an Aboriginal man or woman; 25 percent wouldn't mind, and 13 percent said that this would depend on the type of person (6 percent did not know). Having an Aboriginal family as neighbours was much less objectionable to the respondents: 29 percent would be unhappy to live next to Aborigines, 37 percent did not mind and 34 percent felt that this would purely depend on the type of family.

Respondents were next asked how they generally felt about Aborigines. As all other questions in the survey this was an open-ended question, leaving people free to formulate their answer and choose their own terms of reference. Such questions, it is well known, provide difficulties in categorizing the responses, but on the other hand are more useful in revealing whether a respondent has an opinion on a subject at all, how far his knowledge of the subject goes and which of its dimensions matter to him. Anyway, the majority of respondents (64 percent) at first sight appeared rather neutral in their feelings towards Aborigines, that is, they did not express distinct hostility or sympathy, some in fact themselves said they felt neutral in this matter. Certainly these answers contained a degree of indifference which could partly be attributed to the general and abstract nature of the question. Yet, indifference would also be due to the fact that Whites had very little to do with Aborigines; to most of them Aborigines were shadowy figures in the background of social life, people who did not interfere with ones life and till then had not presented a threat to ones peace of mind. When discussing their feelings these respondents usually added some comments about the social characteristics of Aboriginal people, or certain groups of them, and about the way they were or should be treated by

the Whites. Mainly those characteristics were mentioned that were considered a disadvantage for the adaption of Aborigines to the White way of life. Thus it was said that Aborigines should learn to look after themselves better and become less dependent on others, that they were apathetic, drank too much, needed better work discipline etc. Characteristics that Aborigines could not really be blamed for were: tribal customs, different background and habits, and generally the fact thet they hadn't had the "start" that Whites had. Unlike those who had pronounced unfavourable feelings about Aborigines, respondents in this category would not make rapid generalizations but allowed for individual and group differences, yet their viewpoints still contained a good deal of stereotyping and judgment based on scant knowledge. From most of their answers, in fact, one could gather that Aborigines were allright provided they were like Whites. Some examples of answers are given below:

- There's good and bad among them. I think they need help, but they're not getting the right kind of help. The money that's spent on Aborigines should go to institutions, like missions, not to individual people. The money that some of them get from social services is often gone within a few days.
- You can't generalize, they're just like the Whites good and bad; some of them have good jobs here in Carnarvon. Well, of course some of them drink too much, that is, they seem to be much more affected by it than White people. The Coloured people that live around here are quite decent, the grown-ups that is, their children are very undisciplined.
- Individuals are very nice, as a race they haven't had the start that the White people had. I think tribal customs are a handicap for them....like for instance at work they have very little sense of punctuality, I know the prawning factory sacked a lot of them because they didn't show up regularly. Well, they haven't got a clock on the Reserve, if the sun doesn't shine for a few days they wouldn't know what time it is. It's a clash between two different backgrounds and habits. They should mix up with White Australian society, school will be very important for them in that respect.
- Not unfavourable, quite neutral actually, not like these do-gooders who are all fired up about them; in this town

you see people who do well for themselves, others who got absolutely nothing; I don't care much about it really.

17 Percent of the respondents expressed outspoken antipathy to Aborigines. From them one would get answers like:

- They should be treated as an Aboriginal, not be brought amongst the White people. They should build houses for them where they can stay together and another thing is that the government shouldn't give them pensions, it just goes to the pubs. Their children go to school with our kids but that's bad, they should stay at the mission if you ask me.
- As long as they don't bother me I won't bother them. But you can't expect of old people who lived with them in the bush to be happy with this sudden burst of sympathy for the Aborigines. It has changed too sudden to be real since the Labor Government came in. You see the Whites working their guts out and the old "boong" can get his unemployment benefit as he pleases.
- As long as they leave me alone I don't care. I think they get things too good, their kids get 5 dollars a week at high school, books free, they get medical treatment free....we don't get these things for nothing.

A further 19 percent said they felt sympathy for Aborigines. Characteristically these people would express awareness of the discriminatory mechanisms to which Aborigines were subjected, of the oppressive force of White society, of the fact that after all Aborigines had "owned the country" before the Whites came in. At the same time some of their answers had an undertone of paternalistic pity for a backward people, for a group lagging behind in sociocultural evolution:

- I feel sorry for them, they have the wrong colour in a White man's world. I think I am tolerant towards them.. ..I'm happy to be born White and not Black.
- On the balance there could be done a lot for the Aborigines, like education, jobs. Not just teach them the three R's but give them settlements which are self-supporting.
- It's up to us to accept them, but not to bully them into our way of living. Don't upset their habits and customs they had for years. You can try to change some of their bad customs, if they have them. Put them under

the authority of their own. It's just like us trying to tell a Chinese or a Japanese how to live. These people can't understand us and we can't understand them. They have roamed through this country for centuries. In 150 years we expect them to be like us. I think they have done a marvellous job in the time they had available.

More than half the respondents (56 percent) thought that Whites did not treat Aborigines differently than they would treat people of their own colour; 21 percent thought that such a difference in interethnic behaviour was noticeable; 23 percent said it was hard to generalize about this, both on the part of the subjects and the objects of such behaviour.

A very high percentage of respondents (88 percent) were convinced that Aborigines got a "fair go" in their town, 8 percent said they didn't, 4 percent did not know. Giving people a fair go, that is, treating them fairly, giving them an honest opportunity, is one of the basic Australian values and one can expect people to be reluctant to admit that this ethical standard is flouted with regard to their Aboriginal fellow citizens. This, perhaps, could be an explanation for the high percentage of respondents who believed that Aborigines got a fair go. Yet, I think this is only an incomplete explanation. A number of respondents honestly believed that Aborigines had exactly the same opportunities for getting ahead as they themselves, but simply lacked certain capacities to take advantage of these opportunities. These respondents just did not recognize the structural mechanisms of discrimination working against Aborigines, nor did they show any awareness of the historical process that had lead to the Aborigines' present position in the Carnarvon community.

More specific enquiries were further made into White beliefs about the opportunities open to Aborigines in the fields of employment, housing, health care, and education. Expectedly I found very much the same response pattern as with the previous more general question, yet, some interesting differences appeared. According to 83 percent of the respondents Aborigines had the same opportunities for getting jobs as the Whites, whereas 4 percent was of a contrary opinion. 13 percent made some provisos which mainly concerned the fact that Aborigines lacked the education and skills, and as some said intelligence, necessary for certain jobs. Some respondents thought that Aborigines had

the same opportunities for bush jobs but not for those in town. Strongest awareness of a difference in opportunities between Aborigines and Whites existed with respect to housing. Here "only" 69 percent felt that there were equal chances, 23 percent denied this and said that more could be done for Aborigines in the field of housing, 6 percent said that chances for getting a house depended on whether Aborigines were believed to be "respectable" and could keep their house clean and tidy, 2 percent didn't know whether there were equal opportunities. Nearly all respondents (94 percent) were convinced that Aborigines received the same health care as Whites, 6 percent did not know. Many in fact said that Aborigines were better off than Whites since they had the "Silver Chain" organization and the Community Health Department to look after them. Indeed, both organizations did very much for Aboriginal health. The local medical superintendent of the Community Health Department, a state institution, had set up a very thorough systematic check of the health of Aboriginal people, particularly on the Reserve and in East Carnarvon where the need was greatest. Through his personal devotion and sympathy he had succeeded in winning the confidence of the whole Aboriginal community and had become immensely popular as was also the case with the health sister of the Silver Chain organization. Their efforts, of course were very necessary, and in spite of them Aborigines still had great health problems, a fact which hardly any of the respondents to my interview recognized. As for schooling, here the maximum percentage of respondents believed Aborigines had the same opportunities. However, 17 percent in their answer pointed at the handicaps facing Aboriginal children. Some saw these as inherent to the situation Aborigines found themselves in, others thought that adult Aborigines had brought these disadvantages on themselves.

Financial and other assistance offered to Aborigines by governmental and other agencies was judged as being sufficient by 56 percent, while 8 percent thought that more should be done to alleviate Aborigines' problems. 36 percent of the respondents thought that far too much help was being given to Aborigines.

When asked whether they thought that Whites were generally better-off than Aborigines 56 percent answered affirmatively, 21 percent denied it, 21 percent said that one could not generalize, and 2 percent didn't know. With this question in a sense I beat upon an open door, for it would be hard to

deny that Whites in Carnarvon were economically well ahead of the majority of Aborigines. I suspect therefore that it must have been a provocative question to a number of people. Such questions are usually not recommended in text books on research methods but to my mind can be quite revealing. Many of the respondents who agreed that Whites were better-off immediately added that it was their own fault that Aborigines were less prosperous; some initially did not even answer the question itself but began by saying that both groups had the same opportunities. Some examples of answers are given below:

- Sure they're better off, and if they aren't they go and work for it and make sure they are well-off too. But the Aborigine doesn't worry all that much.
- Yes, and with reason. Aborigines got no ambition, they don't stick to their jobs.
- Certainly they are better-off and it's because they all work, you'll find very few Whites out of work here.
- Oh yes, they are so much better-off. The Aborigines are worst-off in housing. Another thing they haven't got is a club, they should have some centre where they could come together, now they have to go out in the street, nothing to do for them.
- Yes definitely, we are on a different level so we should be better-off than the Aborigines.

The most blatant prejudice against Aborigines was expressed by those who categorically denied that Whites were better-off:

- I think they are better-off than we, they don't have to work. Aboriginal kids who go to school and haven't got money don't have to pay fees.
- The Aborigines can get exactly the same as the Whites, or in fact better, they just spend all their money on drinking and gambling.
- No, I think they are even better-off than we are financially, they get their tucker free, don't have to work for it.

21 Percent refused to generalize about this subject. These respondents pointed out that there were Aborigines who were as prosperous as the Whites and, like those who freely admitted the greater wealth of Whites, were quick to remark that economic prosperity was something one could work for so that basically both groups had equal opportunities:

- They both got the same chances; some Whites are better-off yes, but if the Coloureds don't work they still get groceries, they still get meat.
- That's natural, you can't get away from that. Still, some Coloureds are as good-off as Whites are. They aren't as well-of because they haven't got the opportunity nor the ambition. If a Jamadji comes in here with money he spends the lot; they have no ambition because they haven't been encouraged....never learned a trade, you never see a Jamadji carpenter, bricklayer.
- Some Coloured people are prepared to help themselves, they get the same chances. There's a minority of natives who haven't got what the Whites have but then you see the others who have good houses and that are prepared to work for it.
- It depends on who you mean. The majority of those who draw pensions have less responsibilities than I have. On the Reserve they don't have to pay for electricity and water. We're trying to live better, we have been building up for our pension, they get everything for nothing.

Generally respondents seemed reluctant to consider any other explanation for the economic deprivation of Aborigines than that it was their own fault. This appeared more clearly again when I asked them what they thought Aborigines lacked most. Even though this question was not put to those who thought that Aborigines were better-off than Whites, 17 percent of the respondents still replied that Aborigines lacked nothing. "They've got all they need", it was said: "jobs, education etc.". 40 percent mentioned only immaterial things that Aborigines were short off and the absence of them was regarded as the cause for Aboriginal socioeconomic deprivation:

- I believe that what they lack most is guidance, it's the same as with a child: you have to learn it how to handle things.
- Many of them are still backward; you will never change the old ones. All Aboriginal children got education now but what they need is encouragement by their own people.
- They lack the drive more than the intelligence.
- I tell you what's wrong with them, they want everything handed to them, some of them can't think for themselves. I think people just give them ideas, they are not needy at all.

19 percent pointed at material deficiencies, while 23 percent mentioned a combination of both material and immaterial things. Nearly all of them concentrated on the lack of decent housing, or more broadly: living conditions. Other things mentioned were: land, facilities for social gatherings and recreation for both youths and adults. In this last-named group one would also find the people (8 percent of the total sample) who said that Aborigines were short of just about everything. As for the immaterial things one would find the same themes recurring as lack of drive, responsibility etc. but in this case related to the material deprivation suffered by Aborigines:

- They need better living conditions, give them something they can look after, make them pay, not a colossal, but a decent rent, so they grow up to be responsible.
- They have very few opportunities and lack in everything; there's no incentive for them to do a thing, a lot of White people say: they're just Blackfellas, Niggers, Boongs....that breaks up their morale.
- What they miss is land and a purpose in life. Mind you, this labor government we got is making it worse: if you haven't got it just come and get it, that doesn't give them an incentive to work.

From some of the answers to the previous two questions it appeared already that a considerable number of respondents blamed the Aborigines themselves for their present socioeconomic inequality. Asked explicitly who or what they held responsible for the differences between the two groups 54 percent pointed at Aborigines themselves. 25 percent blamed circumstances beyond the Aborigines' control, but the role of Whites in the origin and continuation of these conditions was hardly taken into account. Practically all responses in this second category reverted to a crude conception of social evolution:

- They are just not at White level yet; it's natural that they haven't got what the Whites have.
- It's nobody's fault, it's an evolution of society. White people haven't had time to worry about that.
- They are a primitive people who simply cannot be put into the 20th century all of a sudden, it's unfair to hurry them.
- They had too short time to develop, still they did a mighty good job, look how they learned horse riding and

stockwork.

Of the remaining respondents 13 percent blamed the government, some for not doing enough for Aborigines, others for being too lenient with them, giving them too much for free and through this failing to create incentives to work. 4 percent said that Whites could do more to help Aborigines while 4 percent did not know what could be the reason for Aborigines' inequality.

On the grounds of these opinions it is not surprising to find that 71 percent of the respondents thought that in principle Aborigines could do as well as Whites. "Of course", it was said, "there are no barriers, all the opportunities are there for them". 21 percent made some reservations: a number of them said that it would take a long time, others replied that maybe the "Coloured people" could, but certainly not the full bloods, others again felt that a certain class distinction would remain, as one man said: "particularly among society people". 4 percent believed that Aborigines were incapable of reaching equality ever, a further 4 percent could not answer the question.

Asked what they saw as the biggest fault(s) of Aborigines, respondents readily began to sum up. Yet, 17 percent doubted whether one should speak of faults, or noted that one should distinguish between good and bad Aborigines. The latter distinction, however, carried a great deal of ethnocentrism, since those who were considered as good were the ones who conformed to White values. Among the 83 percent of respondents who readily mentioned faults of Aborigines drunkenness was clearly a favourite, 50 percent of the total sample mentioning it (1). Other negative qualities attributed to Aborigines were: irresponsibility, lack of ambition or drive, neglect of home and children, squandering money, having too big families. In themselves I do not find these qualifications interesting, only the fact that people were quite willing to utter them and thus categorize their Aboriginal fellow citizens. Certainly, it is in the nature of sociological interviews to elicit generalizations about a subject, yet, one should not underrate the preparedness of respondents to speak their mind. When asking, for example, if they thought that Aborigines misused the social services more than Whites (in a way a leading question), 46 percent of the respondents declined to generalize about this. While 54 percent affirmed this, the remaining respondents said there was no evidence for it, that they didn't

know or flatly denied it. "My God no", a man exclaimed, "the Whites misuse it too", and another respondent candidly stated: "They don't abuse it more, they use it more, and even that I don't know for certain".

Talking about the future of Aborigines it was once more (explicitly or implicitly) confirmed that respondents generally considered the coexistence of two such different groups of people as Whites and Aborigines to be a problem. That this problem would eventually be solved by the Aborigines becoming socially and economically equal to the Whites was believed by 50 percent of them. A number of them even believed that Aborigines would disappear altogether, that is, would amalgamate into the White group. Others (35 percent) expressed greater scepsis as to whether a solution to the "Aboriginal problem" would be found. Some expressed fear of the Aborigines becoming more militant, others said that it would take a very long time before they would become equal to the Whites or did not believe in this at all.

As their own choice for a solution of the problematic nature of Aboriginal-White relations, 52 percent preferred assimilation, 35 percent was of a contrary opinion, feeling that Aborigines should develop separately from the Whites. Among these two groups of respondents one would both find people who were generally hostile towards Aborigines as well as those who felt sympathy for them.The rest were undecided, some of them saying that they didn't know, others that Aborigines should make out for themselves or that assimilation was the correct solution for certain groups of Aborigines only. A woman, for instance, said: "half-castes got nothing to keep, but full bloods should retain their own culture, still I think it's practically impossible, tourists and them would muck things up".

An important issue for the future of Aborigines is that of landrights, the return to Aboriginal control of tribal areas. Asked for their opinion about the desirability of such a policy 40 percent said they would be in favour of this. It proved that there was a fairly great consistency in respondents' ideas about future development of Aboriginal-White relations and their views about landrights. Thus, respondents who were for separate development also agreed with giving Aborigines back some of their tribal territories. Very few people indeed contradicted themselves on this point. Those who agreed to landrights made comment as:

- They were here before us and should have their own tribal ground; Whites have got their own traditions which they can stick to, but the Aborigines have to come all the way towards the White people, that's not right.
- I agree to that, they're good stockmen, they can run the country. The Japs come in and the Americans can buy big properties too, so I don't see why the Aboriginal people can't get it, they have the first right.
- That's what they should have done long before, but then they should also keep everybody out: missionaries, medical care etc.
- Well, it's their own country, although if they would retreat it would not help integration; it seems allright to me for the older people, although I don't think the young ones would be happy about it.

15 Percent were dead against landrights:

- I think that's nonsense, these so-called tribal grounds don't exist if you ask me.
- I just say this: they wouldn't have been here if it wouldn't have been through the White people.
- They're not ready for it, can't manage the property.

23 percent thought that land should be given only to specified groups of Aborigines with whom one mainly meant those who had an identifiable link with tribal territories. Others said that certain conditions should be met, meaning that Aborigines should "do" something with the land, that is, make it economically useful. A further 23 percent were undecided on this issue.

Summary.

The attitudes of Whites towards Aborigines seem to be based on very little knowledge of this group. Although, as we have seen, Whites in majority say that they know Aborigines personally in most cases this concerns a superficial aquaintance only. There is very little recognition of the environmental disadvantages that Aborigines as a group face, and even less does one acknowledge that Whites have played a major role in the creation and continuation of these conditions. Whites almost unanimously believe that Aborigines are in an inferior social and economic position but in majority take this as proof of the inferiority of Aborigines themselves and of their inability to cope with "modern" life. Taking this point

into account especially, it seems warranted to say that the majority of White respondents in my sample were unfavourably disposed to Aborigines. That such an attitude does not more often lead to friction and confrontation between the two groups seems largely due to the fact that Whites and Aborigines still have their own separate social "district" and, more important still, that Aborigines, as I will argue more fully later, do not yet revolt against their confinement to the fringe of Australian society.

The Aboriginal View.

As was noted before the social and economic situation of Aborigines in Carnarvon resembles that which is indicated by the concepts of the marginal situation and the culture of poverty. Both terms refer to a stratification pattern like that which characterizes Aboriginal-White relations. As is suggested by these concepts the subjective perception of the nature of this stratification pattern, of the permeability of the barrier between the groups involved, in short, the way in which Aborigines perceive their own socio-economic position is relevant to an appraisal of their future. Participation in the political process and the nature of such political action by Aborigines will depend on whether they acknowledge the existence of inequality between themselves and Whites, what they see as its cause, and on whether they reject it and look for potential avenues of putting an end to it.

Glimpes of the way Aborigines perceive their social situation have already been exposed in previous chapters. There I have dealt with Aboriginal beliefs about their own cultural traditions, internal structure of the Aboriginal community, employment and income, living conditions, school education and the like. In the following paragraphs I will attempt to extend this analysis, concentrating mainly on the questions raised above. In order to learn something of the way Aborigines look at Whites and their relations with them I found it insufficient to merely rely on casual and spontaneous expressions of such beliefs. During their daily routine activities people normally do not go around uttering profound thoughts about their social environment. What's more, if they do make such remarks it is often difficult to draw general conclusions from them as they are hard to quantify. Also, the absence of comments on certain subjects does not necessarily mean that these subjects are unimportant to people or that they have no thoughts about them at all. To

give an example: during my research I was particularly watchful for Aboriginal opinions about White people and their way of life. Sometimes remarks about this would be made. One man would express his admiration for Whites, another one his contempt or indifference. Still it was hard if not impossible to find out how general such feelings and ideas were. Therefore I largely rely on data obtained by means of interviews when discussing Aboriginal opinions about Whites. Certainly this method has an air of artificiality, yet, in combination with earlier presented data on interaction patterns I trust that a relatively rounded picture of Aboriginal-White relations will be given.

In Aboriginal thinking, and this I have argued earlier applies to representatives of all three residential groups, Whites belong to a different category. In informal discussions Aborigines would spontaneously refer to Whites as a separate group, for instance, would compare themselves to Whites or would contemplate how Whites would act in similar situations. Talking with me about fighting and ending up in prison a man remarked: "You know, that doesn't happen to the Blackfellas only". A man who refused to let his daughter marry a certain young man, defended his stand to others: "If a White bloke doesn't want to give his daughter to a bloke, he doesn't have to either". When an Aboriginal man drove past his neighbours in a nice-looking car, one of them said: "Looks like George is driving a whitefellas car". The contrast between Aborigines and Whites also influenced my relationship with the Aborigines. Especially during the first months of my research my presence in an Aboriginal company would make some people shy, others boisterous, but whatever attitude they adopted I was clearly not just a stranger, but a representative of a different category of people. When I sat down among a group of card players, women and girls would giggle and whisper: "Who's that Whitefella?" and great hilarity would arise when someone cursed; merriment would only increase when the person who had sworn excused him- or herself to me. One day I went to visit someone in East Carnarvon. The camp seemed deserted but then, inside one of the shacks, I heard loud voices and laughing, obviously, as I had learned by then, the signs of a drinking party; a woman's voice softly said: "Sshh....Whitefella outside", a man swore loudly: "I don't give a fuck who he is, even if it is the policeman himself".

Incidents as described above reveal the existence of, what may be called, plural behavioural standards. Superficially seen only two standards can be distinguished: "Blackfella ways and Whitefella ways", but at a closer look things are more complicated. For instance, Aboriginal traditional culture form part of Blackfella ways of certain people only. More insight into this complex matter may be afforded by the discussion of Aboriginal beliefs about their social environment. One thing, however, to which I would like to draw attention here is that of the negative connotation that is sometimes attached to Blackfella ways.

Since the earliest days of culture contact Whites have never left it open to doubt that to them the Aboriginal way of life was inferior and they have used all their social power to enforce such ideas, particularly in the sphere of legislation. In order to become socially acceptable, to get the basic rights of an Australian citizen, Aborigines had to live according to White standards. Thus, Aborigines were induced to cut ties with their own Aboriginal background and adopt the ways of the dominant White segment of Australian society. About this phenomenon of "passing" DeVos (1972:450-51) wrote: "(it) usually involves selfconscious manipulations of behaviour, hence it involves the maintenance of a facade and to the degree that the facade is not part of the self there is often an internal duality involving a partially pejorative self image". Sometimes Aborigines would express awareness of negative evaluations of their way of life and through this of Aboriginal people themselves. A drunken man interlarded a story about his work with such expressions as: "I may be Black but I still know how to behave myself. I am educated also....A Black man is the same as a White man". More tragic even were the cases in which people adopted this negative evaluation of themselves. An old full blood man shouted to a group of people who had been teasing him: "You are all Blackfellas, that's what you are. You've always been Blackfellas, never been learned properly".

Although the Aboriginal-White contrast is an important factor in Aboriginal lives and at times occupies the thoughts of many of them one must be careful not to overrate its influence on daily behaviour and thinking. It may seem superfluous to make this remark but one is easily inclined to exaggerate the concern with ethnic strati-

fication on the part of those in the subordinate position within the system. No doubt Aborigines were mostly concerned with the small daily occurrences in their own immediate surroundings. Getting a meal, looking for work, finding a drinking partner, playing with the children, gossiping about the fights last night, these were the things that occupied people's mind. As for their social world this was largely confined to people of Aboriginal descent, not only in interaction patterns, as shown above, but also in thought. An indication for this I found when I asked whether different groups of people could be distinguished in Carnarvon: 51 percent of the informants answered this with exclusive reference to the people of Aboriginal descent, while 43 percent referred to the wider community that the question intended to cover, 6 percent said they didn't understand the question.

Asked whether they thought that Aborigines formed a separate group in Carnarvon 34 percent answered affirmatively. Most of these answers pointed at the social cohesion among Aborigines and their different style of life as the causes for their separateness.

- Yes, they form a separate group, they stick together.
- I think they all stick together, they don't seem to mix up.
- We stick to one another. I don't think the White people try to keep away from the Jamadji people, they try to make us change our lives, give us more opportunities. Lot of the Natives got permanent jobs now, got a state house. Of course a lot of us is still sitting back.
- I think they are separate only because their own fault. Ten years ago all the young fellas came from the mission. They (missionaries, Whites in general,D.) tried them out for sheep work, mailtrucks etc. but they didn't turn up for work, camped back in the Reserve, now whose fault is that? They got sick of chasing them around, they did give them a go. If they wanted a job they give it to them all right.
- They don't mix much with White people, only when you work with Whites you mix. It's hard to change, Coloured people won't be accepted by Whites, but they won't accept Whites either, it comes from both sides.

As also appeared from their answers to other questions, these informants generally gave the impression that they believed the gap between Aborigines and Whites would

eventually be bridged.

Some informants deviated markedly from this idea. In his answer, for instance, a man from the Reserve expressed his wish to keep to his own way of life:

- Nunga (Aborigine D.) is a fella that always stick together. I could pull myself together and live as a Whitefella. A Blackfella he can live of the land because that's his natural life; we can live in the bush where Whites would die. Black people say: "I live my own life, that's the way I been brought up and that's how I die".

A man living in town and belonging to a small group of families who, economically were quite successful, pointed at a growing solidarity among Aborigines and through this a growing separateness of them as a group. "Well", he said, "they are getting that way, to get a separate group". When I further asked him if it wasn't like that before, he explained:

- Well, there wasn't much interest in those days you know, they used to live from day to day and couldn't care less what was going on. But now they are starting to realize you know, what's happening all around the world, ... they're starting this....oh if we don't pull together we're not gonna get anywhere.

Now, these two answers I think reflect a situation in Australia in which people of Aboriginal descent, who differ strongly in social background, may be drawn together in a common endeavour to exert greater influence on their future than they have done so far.

Those who didn't think Aborigines formed a distinct group (33 percent) gave answers like:

- No they're all in one now, all friend up with White people, they used to be separate long time ago, but now they're all mixed.
- I think they mix now. The White people are very good to them. Years back they wouldn't see a Coloured person. Now it has changed, better than in the old days.
- They mix up with the White people. You see them going in the pubs and mixing with the White people there. Coloured people like to mix with the White people.

Some informants (21 percent) answered neither outright affirmatively nor outright negatively. In their reply to this

question they expressed a differentiated view of the Aboriginal and/or the White group and consequently of the relations between them. Answers in this category also pointed at conditions which in the informants' eyes obstruct or promote good relations between the two groups. Generally the opinion seemed to be that Aborigines would be allowed to "mix up" with Whites if they behaved in a manner that accorded with certain values.

- A few like to mix in with Whites but most of them want to stick to their own colour, but I don't think there is any colour bar here yet.
- Some of the Coloured people make it awkward for the Whites to take a liking to them, they play up a bit. There's good and bad in both Black and White, rich or poor. I don't feel separate from the White. If you're dressed decent I can't see why they bar the Coloured people out.
- Some Jamadjis want to keep away from White people, want to live their own way of life. Some White people try to keep the Jamadjis away from them.
- Don't know. Maybe the ones that put themselves out, but not the ones that try to mix up. If you want to mix up you can. If you wear clean clothes, be respectable, hold a job, the people will help you more. There's no colour bar today.
- They (the Whites D.) mix with certain ones. It's a big town here, you only know a few. I have got White friends that I go out to and visit. Aboriginal people are not separate from the White people, those who drink haven't got White friends but those who lead a normal life do.

Seven percent of the informants did not say how things actually were but gave their opinion as to how relations between Whites and Aborigines should be. All of them believed that the latter should assimilate into White society. Five percent, finally, said they didn't know whether Aborigines were a separate group in Carnarvon.

As appeared from answers to the previous question some informants saw the cause of the separateness of Aborigines in their own distinct way of life. But what exactly did people see as the core of the possible differences between Aborigines and Whites? In order to find out about this I asked tham if they thought that Aborigines differed from Whites and if so, in what ways. To this question 22 percent answered with a straight no, many of whom did not specify

their answer. Those who did, used criteria as "same level, no colour bar, same way of life, mixing up". The question was answered affirmatively by 68 percent of the respondents. More than half of these recognized "real" differences in the way of life of Aborigines and Whites. Such answers contrasted with those of people who did not actually enter into the differences between the two groups but referred to the social distance between Aborigines and Whites instead. A third group used a combination of "way of life" characteristics and social distance to denote the difference. As attributes of Aborigines such general and rather vague ones as "ways and laws, identity, background, values, way of thinking" were used. But also more specific qualities were mentioned like "lack of education, manner of dressing, not being clean, having strife, fighting and drinking, wrong work habits". It was remarkable that those who referred to specific qualities distinguishing Aborigines and Whites, seldom mentioned "positive" traits of Aboriginal culture. Instead they emphasized absence of qualities that Whites supposedly possessed or, put differently, failure of Aborigines to live up to certain standards. Such answers reflect the strong pressure on Aborigines to copy the way of life of Whites and also show that the negative labelling of Aborigines by Whites has been taken over by members of the Aboriginal community itself. Of those recognizing differences between Aborigines and Whites slightly more than half did not generalize about Aborigines but pointed out that only certain ones among them in their behaviour could be distinguished from Whites. A rather extensive selection of answers explaining the distinction drawn between Aborigines and Whites is presented below.

- They're turning more like the White people. Most of the Native people are getting good houses now:, not like before, they never mixed up with the White people; there's some that like to be on their own, mainly the old people, the young people want to mix up.
- Yes, some want to stop with the Whites, but others don't. If Black blokes go to live next to White people the cops will have to come every night, they get drunk, start swearing. Better-off stopping on Reserve. They want to stay together, they fight and drink too much.
- Some of them are a bit different. Just in this way that they're having strife. Some of them have more strife than White people. Too much drinking is the cause.

There's too many people together. If they would have a good home, that would be different. Too many living together, don't know what to do and then they all go and have drinks.

- Yes, we haven't had the education of the White people. If I had had the education of the White man, I wouldn't be like I am now.
- They're all different. I think most White people look down on Jamadji people.
- Some understand the White people, some don't.
- They won't move in town or mix up with the White people. that's what I think. Some of them live on their own. I suppose the White people want to mix up but the Jamadjis don't want to. Some Jamadjis live in town, some of them stay out here.
- Jamadjis have got feelings of their own that they're not welcome with the White people. When you go to a pub you've got the feeling that they sort of move away from you.
- Most of them used to the old way of life, this heritage is with them all the time. White people have been brought up in White life from baby up. The Aboriginal people never forget their background. I don't believe there is a grudge against White people, maybe the real old people, but with the young people it is different, they have never been ill-treated.
- They're having their own ways. Quite a few people are trying to help us along now, give a person a chance. The Natives nowadays working on the roads, councils and that. When I was a young boy you never saw Blackfellas on any of these jobs, that makes me think that the White people are trying to give us a chance.
- They think differently. Coloured people don't care about possessions, White people scrimp and save for these. White people go all out to win and get something. Aboriginal people don't care all that much.
- They are a bit different. Some live a better life than others, others just stay where they are, don't want to improve themselves just drink their lives away.
- I suppose in the way they think. It's funny but I never thought of myself as any different from a White person, I realize just lately that I think a bit different.
- There are certain Aboriginal people that lead a different way of life. It's a certain amount of diehards and they're not prepared to take the new way of life. But the new

generation will be able to assimilate in the community as a whole.
- Coloured people only live for meat and bread and drink.
- Most of them as long as they get their meat and bread don't care about their homes and getting houses. I think they're happy as they are. I suppose the half-castes and them do better. You'd think the young ones would be interested, they have every opportunity, but they are not.

To complete the picture: four percent of the informants gave an answer expressing how things ought to be, rather than how they actually were. All of them felt that Aborigines should mix up with Whites and should not try to retain cultural differences. Six percent did not know an answer to this question.

It was discussed earlier that the structural position of Aborigines, and of certain Aboriginal sub-groups in particular, made them prone to forms of differential or unjust treatment on the part of Whites. But to what extent did Aborigines themselves feel that they were treated correctly by Whites? In order to uncover their attitudes in this matter I did not use the term discrimination but simply asked whether people felt they were being well treated by Whites,whether they felt that Whites gave them a fair go.This question was answered affirmatively by 52 percent of the informants. Typically the majority of these gave very brief answers and hardly elaborated on the grounds of their belief. Illustrations of a few of the more extensive answers are:

- In Carnarvon the Jamadjis get a go but not in Onslow. In Onslow they're no good for the people that have no job. It's hard to get a job there, but here you can get a job on the station. In Onslow there's only work on the station; when station finish mustering they kick you off, but here around Carnarvon they keep you on longer.
- Carnarvon is a long way better than Meeka (Meekatharra D.). There's a clinic coming here every day, nothing like that in Meeka.
- There's no colour bar here. No matter how dirty the people are, you never hear them saying: "Oh, that fella dirty, he can't come in here".
- There's no White people against the Jamadjis. White people try to bring them together, raise them up. It is only the young people that don't want to help themselves.
- There's no discrimination here, not like the Southwest.

- They (Whites D.) used to treat them badly, but they're all the same now. Now the children can go to school like everybody else. The mission here has made everything different. Some Jamadjis were really nasty but no more now. The mission done a really good thing.
- They seem to give the Native people really a fair go here. Some of the Jamadjis seem to appreciate what they do for them, some of them don't.

Whether or not these beliefs are well-founded. I will not put to discussion here. My study as a whole should shed light on this question. But it may be noted that many informants appeared to be influenced in their judgment by comparison of the situation in Carnarvon with that in other areas. Also, people would look at the past and from this perspective favourably judge the present. Furthermore, interaction between Aborigines and Whites is superficial at most and rarely of a competitive nature; White people that one has closer contacts with are often sincerely concerned about Aboriginal well-being, refrain from categorizing Aborigines as such, and are prepared to interact with them on a personal basis. Another factor that might have influenced Aborigines' opinions, although hard to measure its extent, was the new interest shown in Aboriginal welfare by the Labor government. A spirit of change and belief in new opportunities was in the air. News had reached Carnarvon that Aboriginal groups in other parts of the state with government aid had acquired ownership od a sheep of cattle station and plans for a sheep station to be bought of the Carnarvon people were under discussion. The establishment of an all-Aboriginal Consultative Council, advising the Federal Government on Aboriginal matters, had been decided on, and preparations for the election of a local representative were under way in Carnarvon. Whether or not this new governmental attitude towards Aborigines made lasting improvements in their situation is irrelevant here - so far no sheep stations has been acquired by the Carnarvon people - it certainly gave Aborigines the impression that Whites cared about their future. All this has not been brought forward to imply that the favourable opinion that a majority of Aborigines have of the treatment they receive by Whites, is not at all based on actual White behaviour, But it would be wrong to overlook influences, other than pure day to day interaction, on Aboriginal beliefs about the way they are treated by Whites.

A further 31 percent of the informants made one or more

provisions in their answers, that is, they neither answered the question outright affirmatively nor outright negatively. The greatest number of them (60 percent of all informants in this category) felt that Whites treated them fairly with only one exception: the police. Thus it was said:

- Whitefellas are allright here, but not policemen. Here now you see the police running around the Reserve with a spotlight, like a man is a rabbit, to pick up the drunken blokes. A Coloured fella can't get up, policemen keep him down: "you're a bloody drunk, you got a record". You see Whitefellas they can get drunk....policemen say nothing.
- There's no discrimination here, not like down the Southwest. But I seen police picking on Coloured people a lot, just provoking them and then shove them in for assault....while I've seen many Whites in town, drunk, spinning around in cars and cops turning their face away.
- There's only a few that don't give Aborigines a fair go.. ...cops for one, for sure. They sort of please themselves what they do because they think "Oh, they don't know nothing".
- In some cases they don't treat them well. Maybe they're a bit too hard on the boys from the Reserve. They're used to fighting but the police comes in and pickes them up, but that doesn't improve them.

In the rest of the responses that fall within this category reference to specific people or groups that were believed to treat Aborigines badly was either absent or did not show a consistent pattern as was the case with the police. Only the pubs were mentioned with some frequency as places where Aborigines got a bad deal but nowhere near as often as the police. An odd individual mentioned the squatters, the Community Welfare Department, specific shopkeepers etcetera. Others remained vague in this and said that one could not generalize, that there was good and bad amongst the Whites. A noticeable thing, moreover, was that some informants believed that only certain Aborigines did not get a fair go and that such people had no one but themselves to blame. The general picture of the answers of those who did not give a straight-out positive or negative answer, was that White people were generally fair in their conduct towards Aborigines and that ill-treatment of Aborigines was exception rather than rule.

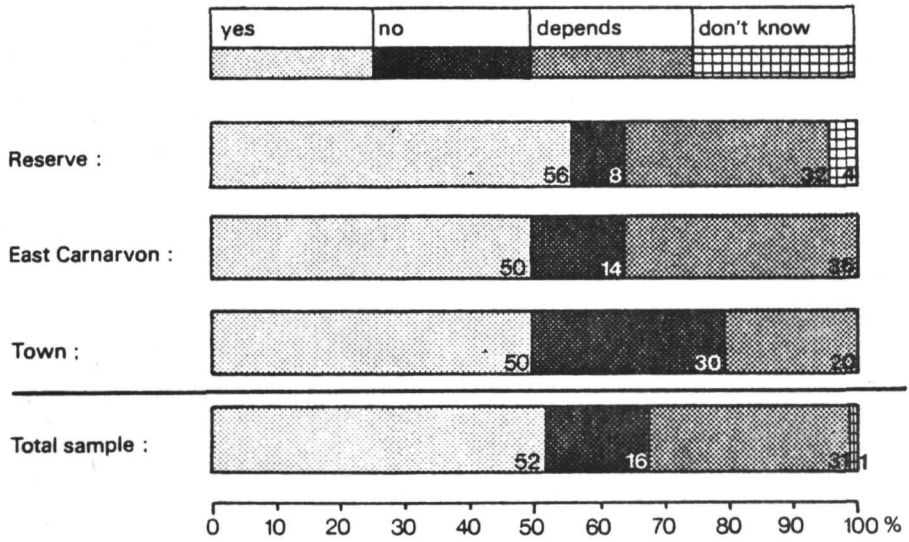
- Some White people are very good, some just couldn't care, they are against Aborigines.
- Might be a bit of ill-feeling (against Aborigines D.) in the pub but apart from that they're all good. In pubs they pick on the Aboriginal people easily, you are not allowed to go in and drink. Only the "Sandhurst" treats you right, in the other hotels they only serve you one or two drinks and then say you've had enough. Here in this hotel once I put 20 cents in the juke-box and they gave me my 20 c. back and told me to get going.
- In the pubs they are treated differently than Whites, as soon as they get sparked up a bit they bring them to the police station, Then again Coloured children get on quite well with White children in the school, look at the shops where Coloured people can book things if they haven't got money.
- The Whites are usually pretty good to them, particularly the working class people are.
- In the pubs they sometimes have a rough time but I reckon that sometimes it's their own fault.
- If they get treated badly I maintain that some of them bring it on themselves, they go around untidy and swearing, you can't blame people for looking down on them, it's only because some of them can't hold their liquor.

A relatively small percentage of informants thought that Whites did not give Aborigines a fair go (16 percent). Remarkable, however, was that a much greater proportion of townspeople than from the Reserve and East Carnarvon were dissatisfied with the way Whites treated Aborigines (see figure 13). Examples of negative answers are:

- There is a colour bar here. Jamadjis are not allowed to go into some of the bars. I wanted to rent a caravan in one of the caravan parks but they refused me, said that I had a bad record.
- The pubs class them out. This is pure prejudice. Even people they don't know they kick out. State houses are hard to get for Aborigines.
- There is discrimination in many ways, at school for instance. Kids at school asked my daughter if she ate bowdy grubs and snakes. My boy fought with White kids calling (him and his sister D.) niggers.
- A lot of Whites look down on Coloured people. You do a good thing for them and they turn around and say: "Oh, you're just a Blackfella".

- I think Aborigines are being treated badly in lots of ways. They can't get houses, can't get jobs. They're still a long way behind.

Figure 13.
Responses to the question "Do you think Whites give Aborigines a fair go". Percentages given per residential group and for total sample.



In order to uncover possible grounds for dislike of Whites I next asked if Whites were felt to be better-off than Aborigines. This question was answered straight-out affirmatively by 52 percent of the informants. A further 23 percent said that one could not generalize about this for, as they pointed out, certain Aborigines were as well-off, or better even, than certain Whites. 22 percent answered negatively, and 3 percent did not know.

The nature of the better position of Whites was mainly seen to lie in their greater material wealth. Houses, blocks of land, motorcars, savings and other material possessions were frequently given as examples. Better paid jobs were also mentioned. Only few respondents referred to other than material advantages of Whites. A woman, for example said: "I think they are better-off culturally, or in a better position. They don't seem to care what other people think, are more secure, more ambitious. They were taught this

when they were still young". Others declared that Whites "look after themselves better" than Aborigines, that they "use their brain the right way", are "better educated, more civilized". The majority, however, gave answers like:

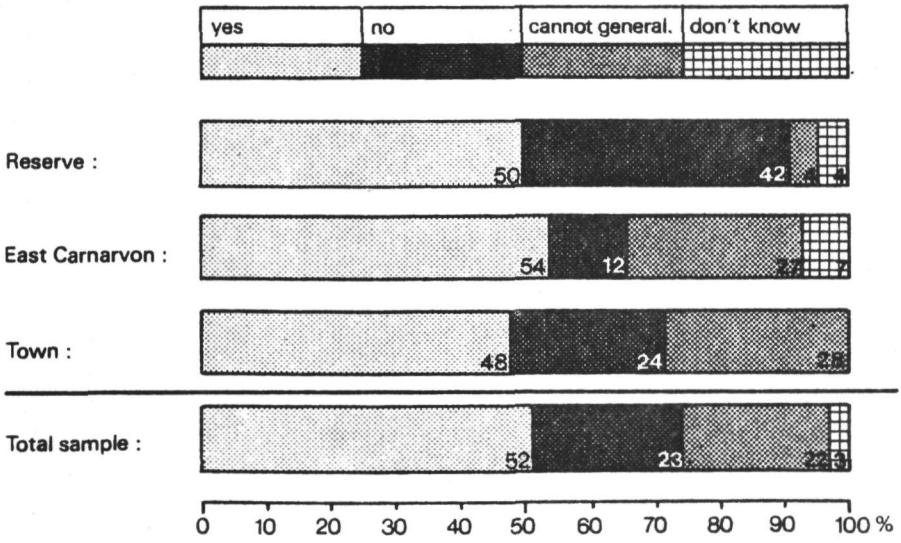
- Of course they are. Most of them have a house. They don't have to wait their turn like the Coloured people. Only the pushy Aboriginal people have got a house, the ones who don't talk to others.
- Whitefellas have better things than Blackfellas got, like flash cars, houses.
- They're better-off in all ways: money, jobs. Poor old Aborigine just takes the job the White leaves. Any worthwhile job the Whitefella gets in preference to the Coloured one.
- In some ways they are. They got motorcars, bankbooks,
- Oh yes, they've got all the houses and the money. Some of the Coloureds are like the Whites, they're gradually coming up I suppose.
- Kanjara and White people are allright in this Carnarvon. Maybe some Whites better-off, they got better houses.

In contrast with this people who replied negatively said:

- I think we all got the same problems.
- There's a lot of Aboriginal people suffering and there's a lot of Whites suffering.
- I don't think the Whites are better-off because the Aborigines they get their social benefit and this and that. They should be just as well off as the Whites really. Some of them are better-off than some of the Whites I've seen....goodness me! makes you feel sorry for them.

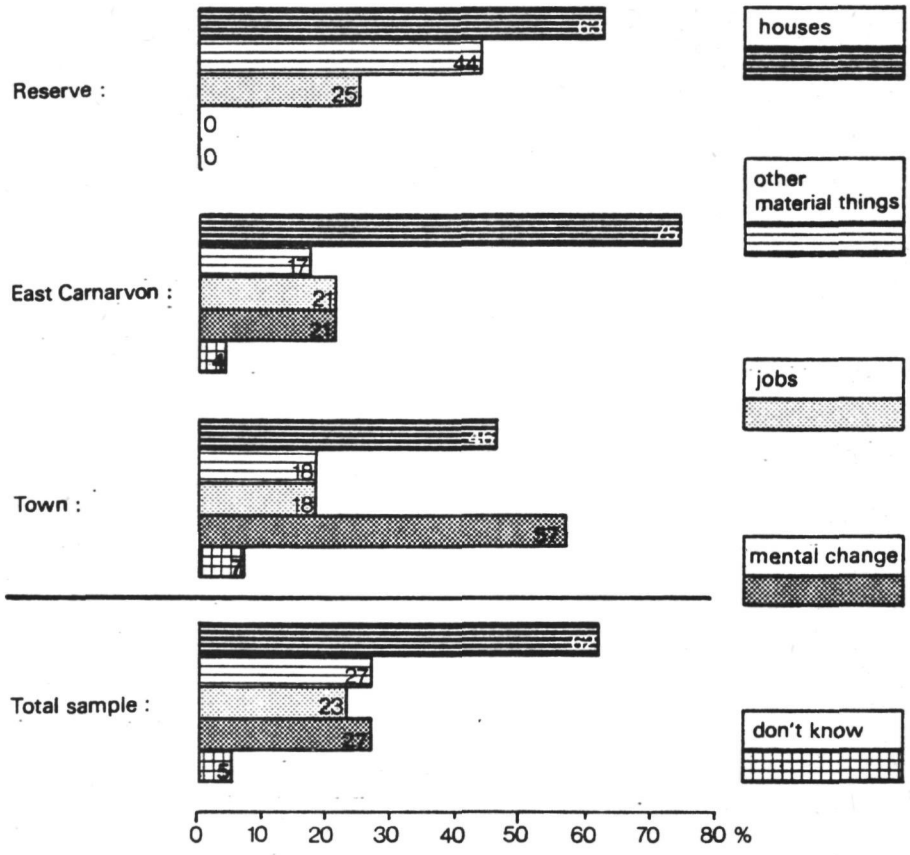
Splitting up the answers to this question per residential group one of the most striking thing is the high percentage of informants from the Reserve who believed that Whites were no better-off than Aborigines. (See figure 14). That 42 percent of them expressed this view is remarkable, particularly in consideration of their poor living conditions. A fairly high percentage of informants from town and East Carnarvon, in their answer expressed that one could not generalize about this and said that Whites were better-off only as compared to certain Aborigines. As also appeared from other answers, many of them felt that Aborigines in town were as well-off as Whites, but particularly in relation to the Reserve and East Carnarvon group Whites had "more to show for themselves".

Figure 14.
Responses to the question "Do you think that Whites are better-off than Aborigines?" Percentages given per residential group and for the total sample.



By summing up the grounds for the better position of Whites informants indirectly had already indicated Aboriginal disadvantages. In order to get a more complete view of this I also asked if they could explain to me what it was that Aborigines in Carnarvon needed most.(2) A distribution of answers is given in figure 15.

Figure 15 (see next page)
Responses to the question "What is it that Aborigines need most in this town?" Percentages given per residential group and for total sample.



As appears from this figure, housing again was frequently mentioned as an urgent requirement. Material things other than houses were also mentioned and included something as general as money, but also specific items as cars, household utensils, furniture, clothes, firewood, small daily necessities of life. But not only material wants were enumerated. Some respondents also felt that Aborigines would benefit from what one might call a mental change. Although such changes should also occur in White society, a majority felt the need for a modification in mentality among Aborigines to be most urgent. Education, expectedly, was seen as one of the major instruments in achieving this end. As shown in figure 15, only informants from East Carnarvon and the town pointed at this need for mental changes:

- Aborigines need to be accepted here and to improve as a race. It's really important that they shouldn't lose

this sense of being a race.
- Aborigines don't know enough to help themselves.
- They need a lot of education.
- The thing they lack most is a good education and I also reckon that they should leave the old grog alone a bit.
- They need to be taught how to handle money.
- Aborigines should get some more self-confidence.

In some of these answers I again found the earlier noted tendency to explain differences between Aborigines in negative terms, that is, by putting emphasis on the absence among Aborigines, or certain groups of Aborigines, of qualities that Whites supposedly posses. Only by adopting White values, these respondents believe, can Aborigines have a good and pleasant life, From here on it is only a short step to blaming Aborigines themselves for being less well-off than Whites. Indeed, this view existed, as I learned when asking in my interviews who or what informants blamed for the fact that Whites were better-off than Aborigines.(3)

No less than 53 percent of the respondents, in fact, thought that it was the Aborigines' own fault that they lived in such needy circumstances! (see figure 16). Thus it was said:

- I blame Aborigines themselves. Jobs are offered to them and they don't stick to their jobs; as soon as they get to town they go straight for the pub. Some of these boys come in, get drunk and don't go back to work anymore. They go around town catching food and drinks here and there.
- The Aboriginal person of today has got the same education opportunities but he's not prepared to take the risk, whereas the White person is. So thereby the White person is definitely better-off. I think that today Aborigines get every opportunity in the world.
- It's themselves. You can only go a certain way to help them and they must try and help themselves. It's the drink, it's always the trouble with the drink.
- It's the Jamadji people themselves that let themselves down. They got all the chances to go ahead and look after themselves now. They could be independent, same as the White people. A lot of them are shy, don't like to speak for themselves. We old people never had the chance to make money but these young fellas now have and I'd wish they'd go for it. You could go sharefarming but it's the Kanjara people that won't go in it, they won't

stick.

- Aboriginal people won't pull together and help themselves. Of course, Coloured people haven't got the houses that the Whites got, but it's their own fault, they wouldn't try. They're shy, very self-conscious and don't dare to mix up with the White people. A lot of them are frightened to talk. Some think because they're Coloured they haven't got a chance. I tell you one thing: drink is their downfall.
- The Jamadjis haven't got cars but I think they don't want to buy one. Sometimes when they come back from a station they've got money for it, sometimes two or three hundred dollars but they spend all the money in the pub. If the White people give them a home they don't want to stay in it, they break it, don't look after it.

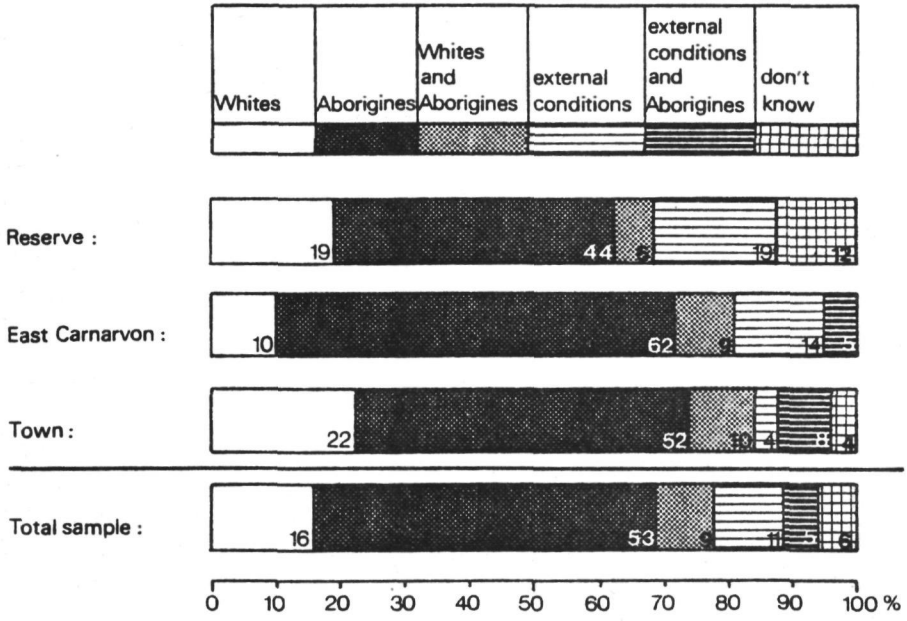
In contrast with this only 16 percent blamed the Whites, as some exemplary answers illustrate:

- The government is to blame. I would like to see that Reserve close down, give the people good houses, spread them out in town.
- It's the White people's fault. They should give something to the old people, car or something. Whitefellas never give the Jamadjis a home to live in. You see the little fellas running around now? The White people should make the mothers look after them, you see some of them naked now. Mothers should dress them up, make them look nice.
- We need more help. I don't know when these houses are coming. How long have we been living in this country? When we first came here to this Carnarvon we lived in bough sheds, just leaves and mud. Nobody talk about that now.
- Whites or government I think. All these people that haven't got houses, Native Welfare should put up houses for these fellas. They need jobs but can't seem to get them.
- If we can get support we might make things out, but there is too much talk and too little action.
- Coloured people have been kept that low, that's why they can't catch up. Now they get better pay, but what they got? No house, just a tent.

A further 9 percent held both Whites and Aborigines responsible for the economic inequality between the two groups.

General external conditions were referred to by 11 percent. Their arguments, in fact, exposed the vicious circle of poverty, for it were the bad housing. lack of jobs and education that were seen as the main sources of Aborigines being less well-off than Whites. 5 percent mentioned a combination of external conditions and a lack of preparedness on the part of Aborigines to make use of new opportunities arising.

Figure 16.
Responses to the question "Who or what do you think is to blame for Aborigines being less well-off than Whites?" Percentages given per residential group and for total sample.

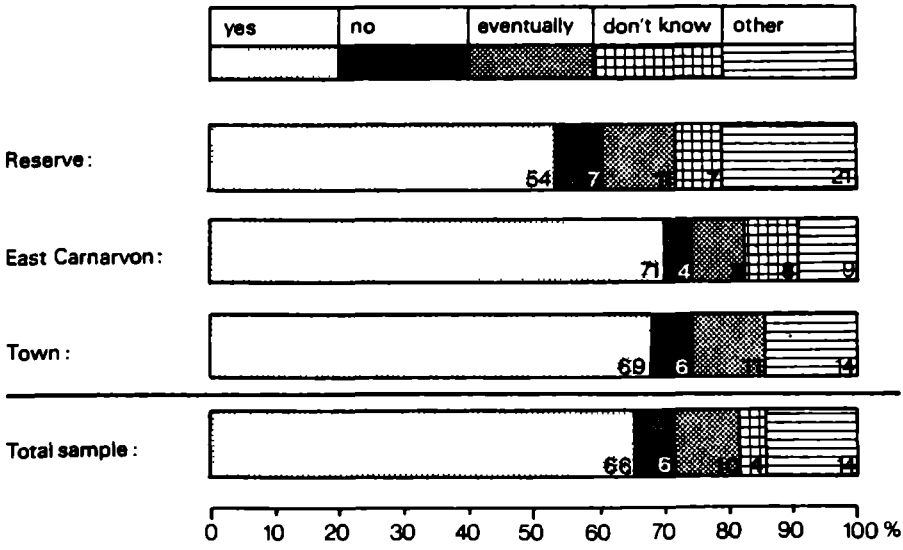


Against the background of the above data it is not surprising to find that the majority of informants (66 percent) believed that in principle Aborigines could reach the same standard of living as Whites, 6 percent were of a contrary opinion and 4 percent said they did not know (see figure 17). Of the rest, some (10 percent) thought that Aborigines eventually could become the economic equals of Whites but that this would take a while to effectuate itself. A woman, for instance said: "Oh yes, these latest ones, the boys that

grow up and go to school, might later on get the same things. Us older people never had that chance". A man put it thus: "I'm sure it will get better as time goes on. But mind you, people can't change overnight". The remaining answers (14 percent) were a bit harder to classify. A number of informants expressed how things ought to be. The majority of answers in this category contained some restriction to the belief that Aborigines could get the same things as Whites. Thus it was said that Aborigines could come up to White economic level only if the government would be prepared to step up its assistance to Aborigines. Others made restrictions in the sense that Aborigines would be able to get the "everyday" wealth of the Whites, but not "big things" as sheep stations, factories, businesses. The greatest number of answers, however, pointed out that only certain categories of Aborigines would be able to improve economically. A number of problems experienced by the people in Carnarvon could be found back in these answers, like in that of an old man who said: "The older people can, but I don't think these young people will improve. These young people really got me tangled". More informants had their doubts about the young generation in spite of, what they regarded as, increasing opportunities for economic succes. In a more general tone this belief was extended to categories of people that were not determined by age: "Some don't seem to care. They just want to live, don't want to change or better themselves". Others reverted to the structural basis of poverty to explain that certain people would remain economically disadvantaged:

- Not the ones who haven't got education, decent homes, and jobs. But those who have, can I think.
- Some have got a good chance, others have a poor chance. It all depends on whether they got money or not.
- Some can't. Simply because they can't get jobs.

Figure 17 (see next page)
Responses to the question "Do you think Aborigines can get the same things as the Whites?" Percentages per residential group and for total sample.



In accordance with the above views the majority of respondents (65 percent) thought that Aborigines got sufficient help from the Whites. A number of them, all of them from the town and East Carnarvon even said that Aborigines got too much help. The question was answered straight-out negatively by 13 percent whereas 16 percent held a more differentiated view. The last-mentioned, for instance, said that help generally was sufficient but that there were exceptions to it like insufficient assistance in housing and employment. Some remarked that help offered was of the wrong kind or ill-directed. It was felt, for example, that assistance should not be given in financial form but ought to be of a social-therapeutic nature.

Conclusion.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Aboriginal views expressed above is the absence of a general grudge against Whites. Other writers on Aboriginal-White relations, however, have mentioned the existence of widespread antagonism between the two groups. Marie Reay (1965:383) wrote: "Aborigines everywere recognize (the White Australians') guilt, and regard the issue of benefits such as rations and free housing as an attempt at atonement but they regard the debt as one which can never be repaid". Rowley (1962: 250) expressed himself in an even stronger vein when he said

that: "It would be strange if, beneath the mask of apathy adopted by Aboriginal groups, there does not remain deep resentment against the Whites. Such investigations as have been made suggest that even the most pathetic remnants, often more European than Aboriginal in ethnic origin but identifying as Aborigines, are united in implacable resentment and suspicion". Naturally, the evidence of the one community discribed here does not constitute proof of the contrary, yet, it should make us wary of sweeping statements about Aboriginal feelings towards the Whites.

The issue of antagonism of Aborigines against Whites is an important one, not in the least from a political point of view. As shown in the introduction of this book, the concepts of marginality and culture of poverty both incorporate the subjective response of minority group members to the dominant stratum of the society in which they live. One of the most crucial aspects is the existence of a barrier between the marginal men and the dominant group. This barrier prevents the marginal people taking fully part in the sociocultural system of the society in which they live. In this sence these concepts have relevance for the political dimension of the Aboriginal question. Antagonism based on frustration over oppression and socioeconomic inequality may lead people into participation in the political process, either through official or unofficial channels. There is evidence in this study to suggest that the majority of Aborigines in Carnarvon do not recognize an insuperable barrier between themselves and Whites, let alone rebel against it. Let me attempt to elucidate something of the background of this relative absence of resentment among Aborigines against the Whites.

Although in this chapter I have been chiefly concerned with possible Aboriginal frustrations based on awareness of present socioeconomic inequality, I will first say a few words about two other potential sources of resentment: the destruction of Aboriginal traditional culture and the long history of unjust treatment of Aborigines by Whites.

As for the annihilation of traditional culture, even to the minds of many Aborigines themselves this is something of a distant past. The active role of Whites in this proces is poorly known or forgotten. Lack of interest in the Law on the part of young people, and incompatibility of traditional culture with the requirements of modern life are seen as major sources of the breakdown of the traditional way of life. Old people who still care about the Law

and remember how Whites played an active role in its disappearance form a minority. A considerable number of Aborigines believe in assimilation and it is in this group that one finds many of the informal opinion leaders and possible political leaders of the future.

Bad treatment of Aborigines in the past and discriminating legislation in particular, of course, still linger on in many minds. It was brought up sometimes in conversations, and people who felt that Whites nowadays give them a fair go added that this had certainly been different in the past. A middle-aged man, whom I asked if Aborigines had hard feelings against the squatters occupying their land, answered:

> "Well they did bucked up when I was a baby, of course. They wandered everywhere and they got the same medicine everywhere they went. Those days you can't say nothing, you're kept low that's where you're kept...you'll eat on the woodheap and that's where you'd have to eat your meal. I've been eating on the woodheap and I've been treated that way. There's a lot of bitterness in us all the time but we don't never like bringing things up again, never".

At the same time this informant thought that nowadays Whites give Aborigines a fair go and that the present young generation fail to seize available opportunities for economic improvement. In these words we find illustrated that resentments about the past are there, but also that, under certain conditions, they may be suppressed by other ideas and sentiments. The way Aborigines perceive their present socioeconomic situation is one of the factors that can serve as a counterweight to anger about bad treatment of Aborigines in the past.

This brings us to a third potential source of resentment: socioeconomic deprivation suffered by Aborigines today. One of the reasons for the absence of antagonism is that certain Aborigines have been able to reach at least the same level of prosperity as working-class Australians. Such people, we have seen, are a minority, yet, in this little community they serve as an example of apparent opportunities and offer hope for the future to those who aspire to assimilate into White society. Surely not all the people of this group are satisfied with their present position vis-a-vis the Whites but those who are can still have an important influence on the opinion of others. This is particularly so since many

of the townspeople who are content with their economic achievements in a way form an elite and appear to serve as important opinion leaders. Some of them, moreover, have not severed ties with less fortunate relatives and friends and are active in the Guda club through which an important link with the poor on the Reserve and East Carnarvon is maintained. A second reason for the absense of resentment may be that those who are most deprived in economic terms, do not always set high value on material things and the lifestyle of the Whites. As we have seen, on the Reserve 42 percent of the informants even denied that Whites were better-off than Aborigines. Others who recognized the greater wealth of the Whites saw this as something which was in the nature of things and nothing really to trouble oneself about. Many of them, I found, did not have the same drive for material wealth. the same anxious concern with steady employment, diligence and educational achievement as Whites. Such behaviour of poor people is often explained as disdain for values cherished by members of the higher economic strata of society. Allegedly it has its source in frustrations among the poor resulting from their realization of being unable to live up to these mainstream values. It is doubtful whether this explanation can be uniformly applied here. The high percentages of people who believe that Whites give them a fair go, that it is possible for Aborigines to reach the same standard of living as the Whites, that White people give sufficient help to Aborigines, seem to contradict such feelings of frustration. The most important argument against the "contra-culture" (4) hypothesis, however, is that those whose behaviour was contradicting White economic values most strongly, were also the ones who appeared to be least frustrated about the Whites' greater material wealth. Many of them did not think that Whites were better-off than Aborigines and believed that, if they wanted, Aborigines could be like the Whites in economic standing. When asked if they could explain what they considered to be essential for a happy life the majority of them said they did not know, or gave answers like:

- Most of the blokes are happy as they are. I never thought about that much, been in the bush all the time. If you got nothing you want nothing. I really don't worry about things like that.
- I think I'm happy now, there's nothing I need.

- I'm happy if I have my feed and my bed.
- I'm satisfied now. If I want a drink I can go, if I don't want it I can leave it.
- As long as a man has a place to camp it's allright.

Of course there were people who felt unhappy about their inability to live "decent", that is, in harmony with values as cleanliness, regular work, a stable marriage, a happy family life and abstinence. Much of their frustration, however, was directed inwardly on Aborigines themselves. This phenomenon of self-hate has been reported from other minority groups as well. Allport (1958:148), for instance, said that among American Negroes: "The standards of judgment prevailing among White people are not uncommonly applied by Negroes to themselves. They have heard so frequently that they are lazy, ignorant, dirty and superstitious that they may half believe the accusations, and since the traits are commonly despised in our Western culture - which, of course, Negroes share - some degree of in-group hate seems almost inevitable". This explanation, although holding truth, may only be partly applicable to the people who concern us here. Undoubtedly in Carnarvon one finds Aborigines who, together with other values, have simply taken over White judgments of Aborigines. We must be careful, however, not to monopolize as White values what are just more general human values. The need to live in relatively clean and comfortable surroundings, to have a regular supply of food, stable marriage relations (whatever form they may take), a harmonious family life, to be free from continuous disturbance of life by drunks is not something which Aborigines have taken over from White people. The fact that people hold these values does not inevitably mean that they judge their enjoyment of life by White standards. An important conclusion of this observation is that unhappiness among certain people on the Reserve and East Carnarvon about their present way of life should not necessarily be translated as a desire to become like Whites. On the Reserve mainly, but also in East Carnarvon and even in the town, there are people who are not so much frustrated because they miss the material wealth of the Whites, but are primarily unhappy about the social disorganization which has crept into Aboriginal life. Something of this attitude was revealed in the answers to the question what, in the informants' view, a person needed to have a happy life. In all three residential groups highest priority was most frequently

given to a "good family life" and friendship, but only people from town and East Carnarvon mentioned money: 12 percent of the informants from East Carnarvon and 25 percent of those from town saw money as a major concern, against no one from the Reserve! An indication of the fact that the ideals for the future of certain groups of Aborigines do not run strictly parallel with those of Whites, I also found in the great enthusiasm evoked by communication of officials that the Federal Government might consider buying a sheep station for the Aboriginal people of Carnarvon. Never during my stay did I see such a keen interest in a project aimed at promoting Aboriginal welfare. Certainly this was not based on material considerations, for the financial prospects of this undertaking were not even considered and if they were one realized that they would not be great. Instead it was the life in the bush that formed the main attraction: being close to the land, animals and plants that one knew and loved, away from the troubles of the town, hoping for a new meaningful relation between generations and families, making out themselves what was important in life and what not.

But let us return to the discussion of the absence of resentment against Whites. The own Aboriginal conception of their social and economic problems, the core of which does not always entail strict comparison with White economic prosperity, makes it plausible that certain Aborigines see members of their own group as a major source of their problems. They may not see the link between the history of oppression by Whites and the basic characteristics of the socioeconomic structure they find themselves in, on the one hand, and their contemporary social and personal problems, on the other. What is obvious to them, however, is that certain Aborigines drink too much, get into strife with friends and relatives, neglect their marriage partner, and at times cannot even provide the bare necessities of daily life.

If, maybe, in my conclusions I have emphasized the lack of Aboriginal antagonism to Whites too much it is because this is a very relevant political fact. Yet, there is also evidence of distrust of and aversion to Whites as has been revealed in the answers to certain questions. A much needed increase of political awareness and participation of Aborigines may feed on such feelings of resentment. Possible causes of Aboriginal discontent may therefore be revealed and examined by Aboriginal movements and the paradox may arise that, as the gap between Aborigines and Whites closes, antagonism will increase. Maybe the words of a man whom I asked if

things for Aborigines had changed for the better, contain a hint for the future. "Well", he said:

- that's the part. Jamadjis got learned and the more they're learning the more they're getting harder sort of way. Now, of course, they wake up to themselves, something under the surface, I don't know. Squatters told me ten years ago now these country is buggered, we shouldn't have got it in the first place, we might have to give it back to the Blackfellas; now I can see it going to the Blackfellas... ..the cheap days, the good old days are over.

CONCLUSION.

The title of Andreas Lommel's (1969) book "Fortschritt ins Nichts" (Progress into the void) gives a synopsis of his analysis of the problems facing Aboriginal society. Lommel apprehends the inevitable destruction of Aboriginal culture, and through this even that of the Aboriginal people themselves. Without committing myself to his rather gloomy view, I do think that his analysis may be partly relevant to the situation of the people whom I have been concerned with in this study. The Aborigines, says Lommel (ibid.:9-21), live on two levels: in their own crumbling culture and on the fringe of the technical world of the Whites. In the rural areas, he continues, Aborigines have become involved in the White economy and they represent the lowest level in the towns. What started as culture contact ends up as a class problem through the forced adaptation of Aborigines to White Australian society. At the end of the process of assimilation one finds the "farbige Proletarier", the coloured proletarian.

The present situation of Aborigines in the Gascoyne district cannot be understood without taking recourse to the history of relations between Aborigines and Whites. Most significant in this history has been the relative power of the groups involved. When historic circumstances (conquest, immigration, slavery) bring two groups with different cultures together in the same area, they will compete for economic resources while both will also try to continue their own established socio-cultural order (cf Lieberson, 1961). Obviously the most powerful one will win this battle. In the clash between Aborigines and European colonists a huge power difference was involved. Aborigines lacked both the technology and large scale organization, and were not numerous enough, to compete successfully with the White invaders of their countries who had access to superior means of violence. They had very little option but to submit to White dominance or retreat to areas that the Whites did not yet want. Apart from the fact that retreat eventually would be of no avail to them, it was hardly an alternative to Aboriginal people with their strong spiritual and emotional attachment to their land. Aborigines, says Barnes (1960:139), have an "unusually strong attachment to specific sites". This aspect of Aboriginal culture has probably played an

important role in Aboriginal-White relations making Aborigines strongly dependent on the owners of the sheep stations occupying Aboriginal tribal countries. These pastoralists directly and indirectly had a devastating effect on Aboriginal culture by obstructing Aboriginal camping near wells and waterholes, disturbing the native fauna and flora with their flocks of sheep, spreading diseases to which Aborigines had no resistance, shooting or imprisoning Aborigines who disturbed their flocks or were merely believed to do so, using Aborigines as a cheap source of labour.

Thus Aborigines became increasingly involved in the socioeconomic system of the Whites who occupied their land. Following Lommel one could say that as their own cultural tradition became less characteristics for Aborigines they came closer to being a class, a group with a specific position in the White economic stratification system. Clearly it makes sense to consider the situation of Aborigines in terms of social stratification and inequality. Class, status and power three dimensions that Weber (cf 1970:180-195) distinguished in a stratification system to some extent seem relevant concepts in an analysis of Aboriginal life in Carnarvon today. Economically Aborigines, in general, can be characterized as low-income workers and non-property holders (class); they occupy a low position in a prestige or social honour hierarchy (status) and exert little intended influence on people's lives (power). Looking at the Aboriginal community of Carnarvon from the perspective of social stratification I have tried to elucidate the historical process that has led to the Aborigines' place in the hierarchy of power, prestige and material rewards. A large part of my study has been concerned with a description and analysis of their place within institutional complexes as economy, housing, education and politics and it has been shown that Aborigines in majority are very poorly endowed within all these spheres. Aborigines rank low in all the measures pre-eminently used in establishing a person's or group's position in the White status and class hierarchy such as type of job, level of income and education.

Another major point of interest in this study has been the way in which Aborigines themselves regard their social position. I have chosen this approach because I think it is useful to distinguish between outer "objective" social and material conditions and the perception thereof by the

people who are influenced by these conditions. If we want to form an idea of the future of the Carnarvon Aboriginal community it is essential to seriously consider Aboriginal ideas about their social reality. It is all very well for an outsider to talk of stratification, status hierarchy, class, improvement of social position, socioeconomic disadvantages and such, but how is the empirical reality that these concepts supposedly represent looked at by Aboriginal people themselves? Attention for the way in which people look at the world around them does not necessarily mean a depreciation of the influence on people's lives of forces outside their direct perception and experience. Much of an individual's perception of social reality, for instance, is derived from his culture, a system of shared beliefs, symbols and values in which past experiences of members of his group are precipitated. Basically, the social and material environment in which people find themselves has been shaped in historical processes of which they often have little knowledge, or about the nature and significance of which they strongly disagree. In order to understand the present position of Aborigines of Carnarvon such aspects must certainly be taken into account.

My interest in Aboriginal notions of their social world was also drawn by Ruth Fink's (1965) brief discussion of the nature of Aboriginal identity. Much of contemporary anthropological research, she says, is occupied with the question whether the separate ethnic identity of Aborigines reflects real cultural differences. Some groups may still have a distinctly Aboriginal subculture, for other groups this is questionable. As an example of the second category Fink points at Aboriginal groups that live in a predominantly European environment on the fringe of rural towns or in urban areas: "For these groups there seems need for a more definitive term which can at one and the same time indicate that they are a group apart, but that their sense of "apartness' is not based upon the sharing of positive cultural values. Such groups base their identity upon a common protest against their inferior social status, and upon negative reactions to White authority" (Fink, 1965:423). The term contra-culture, coined by Yinger, may adequately represent the nature of the way of life of these groups says Fink. Contra-culture is based on "the creation of a series of inverse or counter values (opposed to those of the surrounding society) in face of serious frustration or conflict" (Yinger,1960:627). Thus

a contra-culture can only be understood by looking at the position and nature of interaction of a group with the larger society of which that group is a part (ibid.:629). Besides, a central theme of contra-culture is the cognitive-affective reaction of its bearers to the social and material conditions existing in the larger society. That is, the way people perceive their social environment is one of the ultimate sources of their way of life.

In Oscar Lewis' culture of poverty concept we find essentially the same points. In this concept attention is given to both macrostructural aspects of social stratification and to the subjective perception of them by the people occupying the lowest stratum in the hierarchy. The culture, or rather subculture, of poverty, according to Lewis (cf 1966 b:XLIV)is a way of life that is basically a response of poor people to their frustrated attempts of achieving success in terms of values and goals of the more affluent members of society. Once it has originated, however, this response turns into a subculture a way of life that perpetuates itself from generation to generation. In Fink's terms: what started off as a contra-culture ends up as a full-fledged subculture. It is this aspect of Lewis' "thinking that has probably drawn most criticism (Valentine,1968, Winter, 1971, Leacock, 1971). It implies that the reaction of the poor to their disadvantaged situation is "incorporated into internal values and norms" (Leacock, 1971:34) which, in a way, gives the life-style of the poor a certain independence from the structural conditions causing poverty. As Lewis (1966 b:XLV), himself says: "by the time slum children are six or seven years old, they usually have absorbed the basic values and attitudes of their subculture and are not psychologically geared to take full advantage of changing conditions or increased opportunities which may occur in their lifetime". This view of poverty, critics fear, may lead to a strategy of ending poverty by emphasizing attitudinal changes among the poor at the expense of changes in the structures causing poverty. Fear of the consequences for social policy of a conception of poverty as a way of life with its own internal cultural dynamics transmitted by learning has probably caused Lewis' critics to overemphasize the direct influence of external conditions on the life style of the poor. As Valentine (1968:113) says; "whatever is distinctive about lower-class life may be no more than a situational adaptation to the structural position of the bottom stratum in a highly

stratified society".Lewis' critics may have been strengthened in this view by his specific notion of culture. Among the traits listed by him as part of the culture of poverty we find a number that are really characteristics of the wider social and economic structures in which a culture of poverty arises. Thus, traits as unemployment, low wages, absence of savings, chronic shortage of cash, absence of food reserves in the home, living in crowded quarters are indices of economic conditions, that is, are part of poverty itself. While emphasizing the direct influence of socioeconomic restraints on the life-style of the poor, Lewis' critics actually do not deny the role of cultural aspects of poor people's behaviour. They merely neutralize this influence by ascribing to the poor the same values and aspirations as the more affluent members of society. Poor people, according to these critics, judge their success in life by the same standards as the non-poor. Therefore, any modes of action of the poor that seem to contradict such standards (and cannot be explained as a direct consequence of poverty) are regarded as a reaction to their awareness of being unable to achieve what they really want: living in the manner of the non-poor. Basically then, Lewis and his critics explain the life-style of poor people in a similar vein, as a reaction to their disadvantaged situation. Lewis believes that in certain cases this reaction becomes incorporated into patterns of beliefs and values: the subculture of poverty, while his critics think that the same "contra-cultural response" is made again and again.

What light can be shed on these questions by the data on the Aboriginal community studied here? First of all, I think, it has been shown that Aborigines' lives are undeniably influenced by "objective" socioeconomic restraints. Different socioeconomic conditions in the Northwest of Australia have produced different lifestyles among groups of Aborigines in this area. We have seen, for instance, that in districts where Aboriginal labour was scarce and where other opportunities for employment than on sheep stations were available, Aboriginal wages were comparatively high. In such districts the process of assimilation has been accelerated and many people from these areas can now be found living in conventional town housing in Carnarvon, having the same types of jobs as their White neighbours, and earning comparable incomes. On the other hand, it should be realized that the move away from the

sheep stations, that is, from Aboriginal tribal grounds, was largely conditional upon the breakdown of Aboriginal traditional culture and disappearance of viable Aboriginal communities.

A second important point to be made is that in my data on the the Aboriginal perception of their social situation I have not found convincing evidence of a contra-culture. It would be far too simplistic to regard the way of life of poor Aborigines solely as a reaction to their awareness of being unsuccessful in mainstream, or dominant i.e. White, values. I need not repeat all that has been said in previous chapters. Summing up it can be said that in view of the (sometimes extremely) poor living conditions of Aborigines there is a surprisingly low level of discontent. Moreover, dissatisfaction, that undoubtedly existed, generally did not result in hostility towards the Whites and their dominant culture. Antagonism towards Whites was greater among the people in town, who had been reasonably successful in White socioeconomic terms, than among those of the Reserve and East Carnarvon. Besides, Aborigines whose behaviour contradicted White norms most strongly were generally not the ones who expressed dissatisfaction with their way of life.

Obviously these data on the relatively low level of discontent have not been put forward in support of the view that Aborigines in Carnarvon have no reason for complaints. My description of their social history and present situation has, I hope, given evidence of the contrary. Material presented here, however, shows that there may be a remarkable discrepancy between "objective" socioeconomic conditions and the perception and interpretation thereof by those who are influenced by them. In the light of these findings it does not make sense in all situations of poverty to assume automatically, as some critics of Lewis seem to do, a direct relation between socioeconomic disadvantage and people's behaviour.

The culture of poverty and the contra-cultural approach of the critics of this concept seem inadequate as models for understanding the situation of the poor Aborigines studied here. Basically this is a consequence of the fact that it is incorrect to explain the Aboriginal situation solely in terms of economic inequality. Aborigines of Carnarvon are not just poor Whites but members of an ethnic group with a history of its own. It is to this history that we have to turn for our understanding of the discrepancy

between contemporary Aboriginal views and their "objective" situation. Such a historic approach simultaneously implies a cultural explanation by showing how present views and values have their source not only in present external conditions but also in situations of the past and experiences with this past of previous generations. From this perspective culture and "objective" evironment are certainly no independent phenomena. On the contrary, culture is a common response of a group to the problems posed by its environment, while the latter, in turn is influenced by this cultural response. From this it follows that learned, socially transmitted systems of meaning and customary behaviour are not static at all, but subject to change as the human environment and human interaction patterns change. In this view we can only understand contemporary Aboriginal behaviour patterns by taking both objective socioeconomic conditions and Aboriginal culture into account. Unlike Lewis, who saw the culture of the poor he studied mainly as a reaction to economic inequality, I see the culture of poor Aborigines in a broader perspective, going back to pure Aboriginal traditional systems of meaning and customary behaviour but also as based on a more immediate past of Aboriginal-White interaction patterns. Such a view does not present Aboriginal culture as a unitary unchangeable pattern but allows for change and subcultural variation. Most important of all, by taking the Aboriginal past seriously and by stressing the close interrelation of culture and environment it draws attention to the fact that in periods of rapid change great discrepancies between the two may result. It has been a basic tragedy of people like the Aborigines that they have been forced to live within a socioeconomic system (environment) that was utterly foreign to them and did not harmonize at all with their world of meanings. It is my assumption that for certain groups of Aborigines in Carnarvon such a situation is still prevalent today. Such people do not react to conditions of social and economic disadvantage in terms of White values, as both Lewis and his critics assume poor people to do, but according to their own Aboriginal standards for living.

This finding has also policy consequences. It means that policy makers should not take for granted that everything that is meaningful to poor Whites also holds for the Aboriginal poor. On the contrary, they should make every possible attempt to get to know Aboriginal standards and aspirations for living.

There are encouraging signs in Australian society that policy makers are prepared to recognize the own identity of Aboriginal groups and admit that they have a right to lead their own way of life and make their own decisions. But possibly these new policies are still aimed largely at groups (usually in remote areas) who are still manifestly under the influence of traditional Aboriginal culture. I should like to draw attention to those groups of whom this is less obvious, like some of the groups in the Gascoyne district described here. For these people too it is necessary to develop concrete, viable alternatives to policies that, basically offer one solution to Aborigines only: living in the manner of the Whites. Aborigines have suffered long enough from policies that have showed no consideration whatsoever for their own culture, their own views and desires. Now the time has come for a change.

NOTES.

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION.

1. The term traditional is sometimes given the connotation of something old-fashioned or outdated, without relevance for the present time. This, of course, is not meant here. Tradition refers to the social transmission of beliefs and practices, to cultural continuity in social attitudes and institutions.
2. For a bibliography of A.P. Elkins impressive work in the field of Aboriginal studies see: Berndt, R.M. and C.H.Leds, 1965:455-464.
3. For a more complete list of traits see: Lewis, 1964:152-155 and Lewis, 1970:xxvi-xxviii.
4. The geographic and economic characteristics of north-western Australia are described in detail in Kerr, 1963.

CHAPTER 2.

THE HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ABORIGINES AND WHITES IN THE GASCOYNE DISTRICT.

1. Rowley, 1972a:189 calls this act "typical of colonial labour legislation" and according to Hasluck, 1970:107 the act "was designed largely to meet northern conditions".
2. In 1890 Western Australia had been given self government, but the control of Aborigines was retained by the Governor.
3. For an explanation of abbreviations used see p.271: A brief note on historical sources. This particular file DNA, 388A does not bear a year number and is entitled: "Papers connected with the murder of H. Clarkson".
4. In 1898 the Aborigines Protection Board had been superseded by the Aborigines Department the head of which was the Chief Protector of Aborigines.
5. According to Biskup, 1973:181, "In 1930 there were 5,855 Aborigines in pastoral employment, in 1939 this had decreased to 3,190 and not because there were not enough jobs to go around.... In 1937 the Pastoralists association came out publicly against the policy of White Australia and for the introduction of limited quotas of coloured labour from the Empire". This drop in numbers of Aborigines employed was probably also closely related to the obligation of pastoralists to pay £1 medical fund contri-

bution per worker employed under permit.

6. A notable exception to this rule was the Pilbara district where a White man (Don McLeod) organized strikes of the Aboriginal station hands. Many of them left the stations and took up tin mining. McLeod later established a cooperative Aboriginal sheep station: Yandeyarra. Cf D. Stuart, 1959.
7. This restriction of Aboriginal freedom of movement was not new (cf p. 21). Section 43 of the 1886 Act already "empowered any justice of the peace to order any native found loitering in town or who was not decently clad to leave town forthwith, with immediate arrest and liability to summary conviction and imprisonment for a month as the penalty of disobedience". (Hasluck, 1970:160).
8. The falseness of the attitudes of the Whites is illustrated by the case of a part-Aboriginal girl living with her part-Aboriginal mother and full blood father and 4 half-brothers and -sisters in Denham, Shark Bay. In correspondence of officials of the Aborigines department about this girl it was said: "D. is stated to be nearly white and objection has been made in certain quarters to her being permitted to remain with the parents, whose residence is typical Aboriginal. Some time ago the Chief Protector of Aborigines wrote (to the girl's stepfather, H.D.) pointing out that D. would not be received at the local state school and suggesting that she be sent to the Moore River Native Settlement. This is one of similar cases we have. In this instance, the stepfather states that he is able to provide everything for the child's future and does not wish her to be a burden on the Government. At the same time the child's education must necessarily be neglected". (CSO, 1984/21).

CHAPTER 3.

TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL CULTURE. ITS ROLE IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE.

1. In this book I will conform to Tindale's (1974) preferred spelling of names of Aboriginal groups.
2. The name of this group does not appear in Tindale's (1974) review of Australian tribes. Four informants (independent of each other) claimed membership of this group, all of whom were born in the Meekatharra/Cue area.

CHAPTER 4.

THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY AND ITS SOCIAL ORGANIZATION.

1. There are indications that in traditional Aboriginal culture marriage relations were not all that stable either. From stories of informants it appeared that in the old days also there was a frequent change of marriage partner. (cf Maddock, 1974:ch. 3). One would need to know more about this before concluding to a relation between poverty and instability of Aboriginal marriage relations. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to get accurate data on the durability of traditional marriage, particularly of the times before the colonization of the Gascoyne district.

CHAPTER 5.

THE POSITION OF ABORIGINES IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

1. According to the 1971 cencus 25% of the females of 15 years and older in the Carnarvon Shire gave working in a job as their usual major occupation.
2. The philosophy behind this change was that it would be better to integrate welfare and other services for Aborigines and non-Aborigines. Doing this it was thought that the discriminatory aspect of a welfare organization dealing with one ethnic group only would be removed. (Rep. Royal Comm., 1974:35).

CHAPTER 6.

HOUSING.

1. These average figures are based on data of 23 State Housing Commission homes and 7 private conventional houses.
2. Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Carnarvon Town, Council, 9-2-1965.
3. Excessive consumption of alcoholic drink should not be seen in isolation from the total socioeconomic situation of Aborigines. I will deal with this topic more closely in a next chapter.

CHAPTER 8.

DRINKING PROBLEMS.

1. These figures are mainly based on participation observation. Of all the people who are here classified as problem drinkers I have established beyond reasonable doubt that they had drinking problems during the period that I carried out my fieldwork. Indicators for such problems (as also mentioned in the text) are arrests, imprisonment, fights, injuries, difficulties with household budget etc. Since life in the Reserve and East Carnarvon groups enacts itself much more in the open than that of the town group, the figures may be distorted somewhat in favour of the town group.
2. Names used in these descriptions are fictitious.

CHAPTER 9.

RELATIONS BETWEEN ABORIGINES AND WHITES: THE SUBJECTIVE VIEW.

1. Asked, however, if they thought that Aborigines drank more than Whites only 21% of the respondents answered affirmatively, 17% said one could not generalize, whereas the rest said that Whites drank as much if not more than Aborigines. The last-mentioned usually added that Aborigines could not hold their liquor as well as Whites.
2. Initially this question was also asked of those who had earlier expressed that Whites were not better-off than Aborigines. It appeared, however, that people who had responded in this way answered the question about the needs of Aborigines by saying: "they're not short of anything", "I couldn't tell you", "Jamadjis got all they want", etc. The question was then dropped, except in interviews of the Reserve people. From an analysis of answers of this group of informants it appeared that there was a great consistency in responses to the two questions concerned: of the Reserve people interviewed, 42% of whom had said that Whites were no better-off than Aborigines, 38% said that there was nothing Aborigines lacked, or that they did not know what Aborigines needed.
3. This question was only asked of those who had not earlier denied that Whites were better-off than Aborigines.
4. I will return to this concept in the next chapter.

A BRIEF NOTE ON HISTORICAL SOURCES.

Apart from using such well-known studies of the history of Aboriginal-White relations in Western Australia as those of Hasluck (1970) and Biskup (1973), material for a sketch of the historical background of the Aboriginal situation in the Gascoyne district has also been collected from primary sources. These mainly consisted of files of the various Government Departments dealing with Aboriginal matters, newspapers, Occurrence Books of the Carnarvon Police station (1882-1900), all of which are kept in the J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History, Perth and the State Archives, Perth. In the text reference to the above sources is usually made by means of abbreviations. A list of these primary sources, and the abbreviations used is given below:

Aborigines Protection Board (APB)
Chief Secretary's Department (CSD)
Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO)
Colonial Treasurer's Department (CTD)
Department of Native Affairs (DNA)
Department of Native Welfare (DNWelf.)
Department of the North West (DNorthW)
Carnarvon Police Station Occurrence Books (POB)
The Northern Times (NT)
The West Australian (WA)

In the Archives files of the departments dealing with Aboriginal affairs are arranged chronologically and the second part of the file numbers used in references indicates the year of filing. Material in the files mainly consists of correspondence, reports of officials, etc.

Other primary sources consulted for this study were still kept in Carnarvon itself and consisted of:

Minutes of meetings of the Gascoyne-Minilya Road Board 1948-1961
Minutes of meetings of the Carnarvon Municipal Council 1953-1957
Minutes of the ordinary meetings of the Carnarvon Shire Council 1965-1970
Selected Records of the Carnavon Court (with permission of the Crown Law Department)
Annual Reports of the Carnarvon Police Station (with permission of the Police Department)

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APPENDIX A

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEW WITH ABORIGINES.

1. What is your name?
1a. Do you also have an Aboriginal name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where were you born?
3a. Where did you spend your youth?
4. Do you know the name of the Aboriginal people in the area where you were born/grew up?
5. Do you consider yourself to be a member of that (tribal) group?
6. Do you speak the Aboriginal language of the district where you were born/grew up?
6a. Do you speak any other Aboriginal language(s)?
7. Do you know what line (section) you belong to?
8. Did the old people teach you anything about the tribal Law?
9. (Of men only) Did you go through the tribal Law yourself?
9a. If no: would you mind telling me why not?
10. Do you think it is possible for the Aborigines to maintain the tribal Law nowadays?
10a. If no: why not?
11. Do you think people should try to keep the Law going?
11a. If no: why not?
12. Do you think that Aboriginal children should be taught to speak an Aboriginal language?
12a. Also at the schools?

13. What is your father's name?
14. Where was your father born?
15. Is your father still alive?
15a. If yes: where does he live at present?
16. Do you know what tribal group your father belong(s)(ed) to?
17. Do you know what line (section) your father belong(s)(ed) to?
18. Did your father go through the tribal Law?
18a. Was he actively involved in tribal affairs?
19. What kind of work did your father do and where did he work?

20. What is your mother's name?
21. Where was she born?
22. Is your mother still alive?
22a. If yes: where does she live at present?
23. Do you know what tribal group your mother belong(s) (ed) to?
24. Do you know what line (section) your mother belong(s) (ed) to?
25. How many brothers and sisters do you have (including stepbrothers and sisters)? Note: names, ages, places of residence.
26. Apart from parents, (step)brothers and (step)sisters do you have any other relatives in Carnarvon? Who are they, where do they live?
27. If respondent did not grow up in his own parent(s) family ask questions 13-24 also about fosterparents.
28. Are you married? What is your wife's/husband's family name?
29. Where does your wife/husband come from?
29a. Does your wife/husband belong to a tribal group? If yes: which one?
29b. Does she/he speak the language of that group? (or any other Aboriginal language)?
30. Do you have children (including step- and/or foster children) Note: name, age, place of residence.
31. Is this your first wife/husband? If no: ask name, regional and tribal background of previous wife(ves)/ husband(s).
32. Do you have any children from this (these) previous marriage(s)? Note: name, age, place of residence (if not yet given in reply to question 30).
33. Has your wife/husband been married before?
33a. If yes: does she/he have any children from this previous marriage? Where are these children now?

34. Can you tell me something about the place where you grew up? (e.g.: bush or town, type of accomodation)
35. Did your family move to other places? If yes: where to?
36. How long have you been in Carnarvon?
37. (If not born in Carnarvon) Why did you come to this town?
38. Where did you first live in Carnarvon?...and after that?

39. Note type of dwelling occupied.
40. Are you owner or tenant of this house (or whatever is applicable)
41. Do you own the block of land on which you live?
42. (If applicable) How many rooms do you have?
43. Do you have running water, bathing and toilet facilities, electricity, modern conveniences (e.g. washing machine, refrigerator, radio, T.V.)?
44. How many people live in this dwelling? What is their relation to the respondent?
45. Are you content with your housing conditions?
45a. Have you applied for another house? If yes: when? If no: (and dissatisfied with housing): why not?

46. Have you been to school? if yes: where? If no: why not?
47. (If applicable) Do you still remember the time when you were at school? Are there any things in particular that you remember?
48. What grade were you in when you finished school? How old were you then?
49. Why did you leave school?
49a. Would you have liked to go on at school then?
49b. Do you regret now that you did not go on?
50. Have you had any specific training for a job? If yes: could you give some particulars? If no: do you consider this to be a handicap?
51. Do you think that when you were at school age you had the same opportunities for education and job training as the White children?
52. How were the relations between Aboriginal and White children at your school?
53. Is school education of your children important to you?
54. Do your children like to go to school?
54a. If no: do you know what makes school unattractive to them?
55. What do you do when your child does not feel like going to school?
56. Have you ever talked to the teachers about your children? If yes: what did you talk about and who took the initiative for this talk?
57. Do your children ever say to you what they want to be when they grow up?
58. Do you yourself have any specific wishes concerning

your children's future?

59. Are you a member of the "parents' and citizens' association"?

60. What was your first job?
61. What other jobs have you had since that first one?
62. Can you tell me something more about the jobs you have had? For instance, about how long they lasted, the reasons why you left them?
63. Have you got a job at present? (If unemployed skip to question 68)
64. Have you been unemployed during the last two years? How many times and for how long?
65. What was the reason for your unemployment?
66. Did you apply for and receive unemployment benefit when you were out of work? If no: why not?
67. When you were unemployed what did you do to find work again? Did you, for instance, go to the Commonwealth Employment Agency, the Community Welfare Department, a private employment agency?
(If unemployed at present)
68a. Have you applied for unemployment benefit? If yes: when? If no: why not?
68b. Do you get unemployment benefit? If no: how do you provide for yourself (and your family)? Who helps you out?
68c. How long have you been unemployed?
68d. Why did you loose your job?
68e. How long did the job last that you had before you became unemployed?
68f. What do you do to try and find work again?
68g. Do you think it's difficult to find a job again?
68h. Are you unhappy about being unemployed? Why (not)?
69. What kind of job have you got at present?
70. How long have you had this job?
71. Is this a permanent job or only temporary or seasonal work?
72. Are you happy with your job? Why (not)?
73. What kind of job would you choose if you'd have a free choice?
74. Do you think Aborigines have the same opportunities for getting jobs as Whites?
75. Are you a member of a union?

76. How much do you earn?
77. Do you get holiday pay?
78. Are you in a superannuation scheme?
79. Do you fill in an Income Tax return every year?
80. Do you have any other sources of income?
    Check for: wages of working wife/husband
    board from others in household
    unemployment benefit/pension/child endowment/other social service benefits
    secondary schoolgrant
    ration orders
    maintenance from previous husband
81. How many people do you provide for with your income?
82. Can you buy the things you need?
83. Have you got any debts?

84. Do you think there are different groups of people in Carnarvon? If yes: which groups do you think can be distinguished? What makes these groups distinct?
85. Do you think Aborigines form a separate group in Carnarvon?
86. Do you think Aborigines are different from Whites? If yes: in what respects?
87. Do you think there are differences among the Aboriginal people themselves? If yes: what groups can be distinguished among them?
88. Do you think of yourself primarily as a Jamadji, an Aborigine, a coloured person, an Australian?
89. (If applicable) Do you object to being called an Aborigine?
90. Do you object to being called a Jamadji?
91. Do you think Aborigines here have good relationships with each other? Do they give each other enough help?
92. What three families do you have most to do with? Are they relatives, friends, workmates, or what?
93. Are friends more important to you than relations?
94. If a relation asks you for help do you feel obliged to give it?
95. Have you ever been let down by relatives when you needed help?
96. Do you think that obligations to relations interfere with your own plans?
97. Do you think that Whites in Carnarvon treat Aborigines well/give them a fair go, or do they treat them badly? If applicable: Can you give examples of ill-treatment?

98. Do you think there are certain types or groups of Aborigines who are not accepted? If yes: who are they and why are they singled out?
99. Have you got White friends?
99a. How did you get to know them?
99b. Do you visit them and do they visit you?
100. Do you think Whites are better-off than Aborigines? If yes: in what respects?
101. What are the things that Aborigines need most in this town?
102. Who or what do you think is to blame for Aborigines being less well-off than Whites?
103. Do you think it is possible for Aborigines to get the same things as the Whites? If no: why not?
104. Do you think Aborigines get enough help?
105. Do you think that so far in your life things have worked out the way you wanted them?
106. Could you explain to me what are the things that you are specifically happy/unhappy about?
107. What are the things that you consider to be essential to lead a happy life?
108. If you are not satisfied with your present situation do you think this is due to your being an Aboriginal person?

109. Are you a member of a club or association in Carnarvon?
110. Do other members of your household belong to a club or association?
111. Do you know about the Carnarvon Aboriginal Advancement Association? Do you attend its meetings? If no: why not?
112. Do you belong to a church? If yes: which one?
113. Do you attend services of this church? And any other meetings organized by it?
114. Do you vote for political elections?
114a. Have you voted for the last federal elections?
114b. Have you voted for the last state elections?
115. Do you think voting gets you anywhere?
116. Do you think Aborigines have a say in community affairs in Carnarvon? If no: what should they do to make themselves heard?

117. Do you drink alcoholic liquor?
118. How do you feel about drinking?
119. Some Aboriginal people here complained to me about

drinking problems, do you think there is cause for such complaints?

120. What do you think makes some people drink excessively?
121. (In case of drinkers) Why do you drink yourself?
122. Have you ever been arrested for being drunk or breaking the law while being under influence? If more than once: do you know approximately how many times?
123. Did you have to go to court for this?
124. Can you tell me something about the court procedure? Did you understand everything of it?
125. Did you plead guilty?

APPENDIX B

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEW WITH WHITES.

(Note: age, sex, marital status, number of children, type of dwelling occupied and whether owned or rented)

7. How long have you been in Carnarvon?
8. (If not locally born) why did you come to Carnarvon?
9. Do you intend to stay here permanently?
10. What is your occupation?
11. Have you got relatives in Carnarvon?
12. Are you a member of a local club or association?
13. Do you belong to a church? If yes: which one?
14. Have you ever thought about the position of the Aboriginal people in Australia?
15. How do you feel about the Aborigines?
16. Do you think that in Carnarvon one can distinguish different groups of people? If yes: which ones?
17. In what group would you place yourself?
18. Do you think that Aborigines form a separate group in Carnarvon? If yes: how does this show itself?
19. Do you think there are different groups of Aborigines or are there no differences among them?
20. Do you think Whites treat Aborigines in a different way than they treat other Whites?
21. Do you think Aborigines get a fair go here in Carnarvon?
22. Do you think Aborigines have the same opportunities as Whites for: a. jobs?
    b. housing?
    c. health care?
    d. education?
23. Do you think Whites are better-off than Aborigines? If yes: in what ways?
24. What are the things that Aborigines lack most?
25. Who or what is to blame for Aborigines lacking these things?
26. Do you think that it is possible for Aborigines to get the same things as the Whites? If no: why not?
27. Do you think that Aborigines get enough help?
28. What do you think are the biggest faults of Aborigines?
29. What do you think are the biggest faults of Whites?
30. Do you think Aborigines drink more than Whites? If yes: what would be its cause you think?

31. Do you think that Aborigines abuse the social services more than Whites? If yes: how did you get to know this?
32. Would you like to have an Aboriginal family as neighbour?
33. Would you like any of your children to marry an Aboriginal boy or girl? If no: why not?
34. Have you ever lived close to or next to an Aboriginal family?
35. Do you know any Aboriginal people personally?
36. How did you get to know them?
37. Have you any Aborigines as personal friends? Do you visit them and do they visit you? If none of both: how do you meet them?
38. Do you think Whites know enough about the Aboriginal people?
39. Do you agree with the claim for landrights of Aborigines?
40. Do you think Aborigines need extra assistance from the Government? In what ways?
41. Do you think Aborigines should mix up completely with Whites or should they retain their own culture?
42. Have you any other thoughts about the future of Aborigines in this country?

CURRICULUM VITAE

De schrijver werd in 1942 geboren in Nijmegen.
In 1960 behaalde hij het einddiploma H.B.S. B, waarna hij van 1961 tot eind 1963 werkte in Australië.
In 1970 legde hij met goed gevolg het doctoraalexamen in de culturele anthropologie af, met als bijvakken sociale anthropologie en sociale psychologie. In datzelfde jaar werd hij benoemd tot wetenschappelijk medewerker aan het Instituut voor Culturele en Sociale Antropologie van de Katholieke Universiteit te Nijmegen.
In 1972/73 gedurende een jaar en later nog eens gedurende drie maanden in 1975 verrichtte hij veld- en archiefonderzoek in West Australië. Dit onderzoek geschiedde met financiële steun van de Nederlandse Organisatie voor Zuiver-Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (Z.W.O.) en het Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies en had betrekking op de historische en huidige relaties tussen Europese Australiërs en de autochtone Aborigines en de consequenties daarvan voor de laatstgenoemden in het Gascoyne district.
De resultaten van dit onderzoek vormen het onderwerp van dit proefschrift.

S T E L L I N G E N

bij het proefschrift
"Aborigines and Poverty"

van Hans Dagmar

1.
Schapper's stelling dat beleid ter verbetering van de sociaal-economische positie van arme Aborigines niet moet uitgaan van unieke elementen in hun cultureel erfgoed is onvoldoende gefundeerd.

H. P. Schapper: Aboriginal Advancement to Integration. Canberra, 1970.

2.
De Aborigines worden voor ernstige problemen geplaatst doordat hen een plaats in de Australische statushierarchie wordt toebedacht in termen van een waardesysteem dat vreemd is aan hun eigen cultuur en doordat ze, om het hoofd te kunnen bieden aan politieke onderdrukking, succesvol moeten zijn in termen van dit zelfde waardesysteem.

3.
Assimilatie van Aborigines in Noord West Australië heeft vooral daar plaats gevonden waar het van buitenaf teweeggebrachte verval van hun traditionele cultuur het grootst was en waar tevens een relatief grote vraag naar Aborigines als werkkrachten bestond op een arbeidsmarkt die niet door één economische sector beheerst werd.

4.
Daar waar op de locale arbeidsmarkt het niveau van genoten onderwijs een belangrijke rol speelt in het differentiëren van arbeidskrachten wordt het opheffen van de tegenstelling tussen Aborigines en blanken belemmerd.

5.
Er zijn voldoende aanwijzingen dat Aboriginal kinderen op school een negatief zelfbeeld ontwikkelen, om verder onderzoek hiernaar te rechtvaardigen.

6.
Zowel het concept van de "culture of poverty" als de "contra-culturele" benadering van de critici van dit concept zijn ontoereikend om de leefwijze van arme Aborigines te begrijpen.

7.
Voor een goed begrip van ethnische tegenstellingen is het noodzakelijk om ethniciteit niet alleen te zien als gekenmerkt door objectieve culturele eigenschappen maar ook door subjectieve identificatie en status-toeschrijving.

8.
In een maatschappij waar exclusieve nadruk wordt gelegd op schools onderricht wordt sociale ongelijkheid bevestigd en bevorderd.

9.
Discriminatie is niet slechts de som van individuele, bewust gekozen gedragingen maar een systeem van sociale relaties met een eigen dynamiek.

10.
Voor de bestudering van ethnische minderheden heeft Max Weber's begrip van "Stände" meer relevantie dan het klassebegrip van Marx.

11.
Het gebruik van de methode van participerende observatie maakt anthropologen bij uitstek geschikt om goed beleidsvoorbereidend onderzoek te doen.

12.
Indien anthropologen recht willen doen aan de dynamiek van 'n cultuur behoren ze niet alleen aandacht te besteden aan sociale relaties als patronen van statistisch frequent gedrag, maar ook aan de visie van de betrokkenen zelf op hun sociaal-culturele werkelijkheid.

13.
Het verdient aanbeveling om het lezen van het blad "Privé" slechts toe te laten in huiskamers met niet meer dan 49 stoelen.

14.
Het bloot waarmee het weekblad "Nieuwe Revue" sympathie poogt te wekken voor bepaalde politieke ideeën wordt verboden zodra het politieke systeem dat op deze ideeën berust realiteit is geworden.